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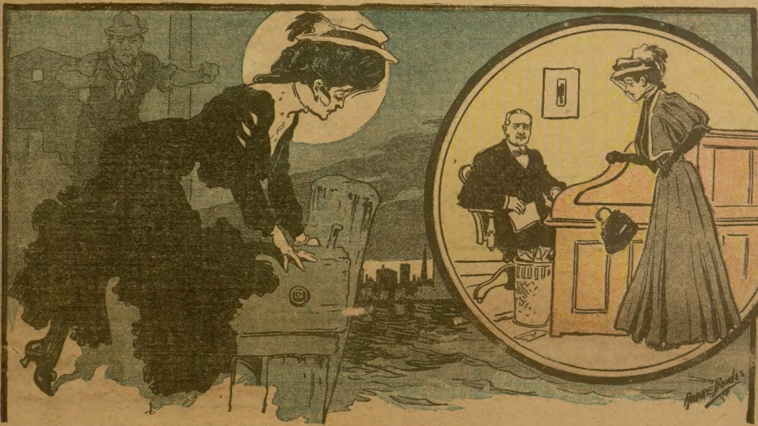

A YOUNG GIRL'S PERIL;

Or, THE WELLINGTON JEWELS.

By T. C. HARBAUGH, author of "Robespierre," "Alice of Maryland," "Bluebell's Secret," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

TERRIBLY ACCUSED.

Lloyd Vanderbeck, banker and broker, millionaire and man of the world, sat alone in the sumptuous library of his elegant uptown mansion surrounded by a thousand-and-one things that betokened wealth and comfort.

He had a right to be satisfied with himself, for that very day he had added a cool fifty thousand to his belongings and could loll back in his Morris chair and feel at his ease.

But he was far from feeling happy. The hour was not late, in fact the clock had just struck eight and he was the sole occupant of the house. There were signs of annoyance on his face and ever and anon he glanced at the door as though he expected a visitor, as in truth he did.

Presently the bell rang, sending its clear notes through the house and the nabob started a little. The only servant within call pattered down the wide hall and swung open the portal. The rich man listened intently and as footfalls came toward the library a smile of triumph overspread his face.

In another moment the door opened and there stood on the threshold a young girl who, seeing that the banker was alone, came forward with a gleam of innate curiosity in her eyes.

She was rather tall, with blue-black eyes that would have commanded attention anywhere, and for more than a year she had been Vanderbeck's private secretary and stenographer.

"You have sent for me?" said the girl as she was motioned to a seat on the banker's right where he could look her fairly in the face.

"Yes," said he, "I sent for you. I am glad the messenger found you at home."

"I seldom go out nights," was the answer and the puzzled look deepened on the speaker's face.

Vanderbeck fingered for a moment half-abstractedly with an ivory paper cutter and then turned suddenly upon his visitor.

"You remember, Miss Cummings, the jewels we had in the private safe subject to Mrs. Wellington's call?"

"Quite well, and such lovely gems they are, too," responded the girl. "There is nothing like them in the city. They cannot be duplicated. Indeed, the possessor of those gems should consider herself extremely fortunate."

"As no doubt she does."

Vanderbeck's face suddenly darkened.

"You know the combination of the private safe, Miss Cummings?"

"You entrusted me with that some time ago, as you may remember."

"Yes. I though it wise to do so then, but I did not for a moment dream that my confidence would be misplaced."

The girl's face purpled for a moment and then went white.

"Misplaced?" she exclaimed, drawing back a little and giving the banker a strange stare. "Pardon me, Mr. Vanderbeck, but I fear that I have not heard aright."

"You have if you have ears," cruelly said the Croesus. "Mrs. Wellington's gems are missing!"

"Stolen?"

"At least she did not take them herself. She was to have worn them tonight to Mrs. Iliff's ball. She sent for them for that purpose and when I opened the private safe the little drawer wherein I had deposited the priceless jewels was empty."

A look of horror came to Miss Cummings' face and she seemed on the point of swooning, but with a powerful effort she retained her composure and looked in utter amazement at her employer.

It was dreadful. Mrs. Wellington's jewels gone? Impossible. No, it was not else Lloyd Vanderbeck would not have uttered the crushing words that had just fallen from his lips.

"It is true," said he. "I have sent for you, Miss Cummings, to say that, as yet, the secret is ours alone. There is yet time to send the jewels to their owner and if you will return them——"

Vestal Cummings interrupted with a cry.

"Merciful Heavens!" she exclaimed. "Surely you do not charge me with the theft?"

"It is all too plain," pursued the banker. "As I have said and as you have acknowledged, you were conversant with the combination of the private safe——"

The girl was about to speak.

"Wait!" broke in Vanderbeck with a wave of the hand. "I have the highest regard for you, but those jewels were a great temptation, especially for a young girl like yourself. Now, miss, if you will bring the gems here, or I will send for them——"

Vanderbeck stopped, for the beautiful girl had sprung to her feet and the color had come back to her face and her eyes were beaming with righteous indignation.

"Will you not retract that terrible charge?" she cried. "Think what it means——"

"I have canvassed the whole matter and in sober mood, and I cannot retract a single word."

"But I did not touch the jewels! I did not take them! In fact, I haven't opened the safe since——"

"Since when?" asked the banker with a malicious grin.

"Since this day a week ago, and then you were present as you remember."

"Come," said Vanderbeck. "I have you dead to rights, as they say, and it is the gems or the police court."

"My God!" almost shrieked the fair girl, but the look in the man's eyes did not abate one jot of its cruelty.

"Mrs. Wellington is waiting for her jewels. I will call the carriage and William can drive you home and return with the treasure."

"But I don't know where it is," said Vestal. "Upon the honor of a young girl——"

"That doesn't go very far in this city," sneered the rich man. "I cannot accept your denial when no one else could have stolen Mrs. Wellington's gems."

For a moment longer Vestal Cummings stood on the clump of exotic flowers on the carpet and looked down into the cold, stern face upturned to her.

Suddenly she raised her hand, which was ungloved, and exclaimed in tones that seemed to ring throughout the house:

"In the presence of my Maker I swear that I did not take the Wellington jewels! I swear that I haven't opened the safe but in your presence, and then only at your command. You make this terrible accusation without a particle of proof. It is so monstrous, so horrible——"

Vanderbeck interrupted with a swift motion toward a call-bell on the table and Vestal's face grew whiter still.

"You will have to give up the jewels," said he. "I want no publicity, but Mrs. Wellington must have her property."

"Which is not in my possession," replied Vestal. "I will not submit to such a charge."

The bell tinkled under Vanderbeck's hand, and in a second footsteps came to the door.

"Will you disgorge?" he asked, eyeing Vestal like a serpent, which he was, a golden reptile that could cover even a young girl's reputation with his slime.

"But I have nothing to disgorge. I am as innocent of this crime as the babe unborn!"

"We'll see about this."

The door opened noiselessly and William, the six-foot coachman, entered the room.

"William, you will drive Miss Cummings to her lodgings and bring back a package she will give you."

"William will do nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Vestal, as she fell back, her beauty enhanced by the color on her face. "I shall not remain another moment under this roof. You have blighted my life, but there will come a day of vengeance and retribution!"

"Threats, eh?" ejaculated the banker, as he broke into a derisive laugh. "That's all very fine, my young lady, but your feathers will fall when you find yourself in the hands of the law. You probably sought to have Mrs. Wellington's suspicions directed to me, but the game won't work. You will either hand the jewels over to William or——"

"Brute! Monster!" broke in the white-faced girl. "Have you no heart in your bosom? Think of my helplessness——"

"You probably didn't think of my honor when you purloined the jewels."

With flashing eyes Vestal took a step toward the door, but the next moment, at a sign from his employer, the big coachman intercepted her.

"Unhand me!" cried the girl. "Wretch, don't touch me!" and with a desperate effort she beat back the fellow's hand and flung open the heavy portal.

In another half-second she was flying toward the door leading into the street, her face blanched with the whiteness of terror and desperation.

CHAPTER II.

THE OWNER OF THE JEWELS.

Mrs. Eudora Wellington, the owner of the stolen jewels, was a person of some distinction. She had an elegant home on Billion avenue. She was a widow of fifty, for her husband, after amassing several millions by questionable transactions on the street, had considerately died, leaving her childless though still well preserved. Her complexion was florid in the extreme and her passion for jewels had gained for her a standing notoriety. Her charities were microscopic in both quality and quantity. She had given a bed to the Hospital for Crippled Spinsters and a diseased Angora cat to the Children's Refuge.

She frequently boasted of these "generous donations." Fortunately she had no relatives to quarrel over her wealth when she should depart this life. Always a guest at high social functions among the "400," she was still regarded as a "good catch" for some one who wanted the Wellington millions, to say nothing of their owner.

It was almost nine on the night of the interview between Lloyd Vanderbeck and Vestal Cummings, and Mrs. Wellington lolled back in her best chair with impatience. She had a habit of holding back from parties until the eleventh hour when she would appear and create a sensation as she sailed into the parlors arrayed like the Queen of Sheba or some more modern mistress of the world.

It was hinted that Vanderbeck had a liking for this woman, but he would never confess to the soft impeachment.

At last the look of impatience left the woman's face, for the bell rang out clear and a servant answered the summons.

In another moment Lloyd Vanderbeck entered the parlor.

"You are still on time," said Mrs. Wellington, as she readjusted her flowing drapery. "I was wondering if you were going to come."

There was a look of displeasure on the banker's face as he took a chair near the millionairess.

"You have brought the gems, of course?" continued the widow.

The cloud deepened on Vanderbeck's brow.

"I have not brought them," said he.

"Then I cannot attend Mrs. Iliff's ball."

"I am very sorry," pursued the banker. "I have to tell you that the jewels are missing."

At this a deadly pallor swept over the woman's countenance and she reached hastily for her smelling salts.

"Missing?" she gasped. "You do not tell me that the Wellington jewels are gone?"

"It is terribly true."

"You had them locked in your private safe?"

"They were nowhere else. There is where I keep all my own valuables. But the jewels are gone."

For a moment the rich woman did not seem to breathe.

"My God!" she cried. "Whatever has become of them? You do not keep thieves about you, Mr. Vanderbeck?"

"I thought I did not," was the reply. "But you see, my dear Mrs. Wellington, one does not know whom to trust nowadays."

"Which is quite true. But my gems?"

Vanderbeck was silent.

"Is it such a mystery that you suspect no one?"

"I am on the trail of the purloiner," was the answer. "I hope to place the gems in your hands within a short time."

"Which greatly disappoints me tonight. I was to be Mrs. Iliff's special guest, you know."

"What has happened cannot be undone."

"Then your safe was burglarized?"

Vanderbeck nodded.

"It is terrible!" cried Mrs. Wellington. "I shall have to send my regrets over the 'phone."

Vanderbeck shifted uneasily in his chair and then looked away.

The situation was most embarrassing.

"Do you know the value of those gems?" suddenly cried the rich woman.

"I have never calculated."

"They are worth a quarter of a million. But whom do you suspect? I cannot think who could have had access to your private safe but yourself."

"The thief was a trusted employe."

"Some rascal——"

"The purloiner of the jewels is a young girl."

"One of my own sex? The horror of it!"

"This person," pursued Vanderbeck, "was my private secretary and had access to the safe."

"Then it will not be so difficult to recover the gems. If a girl really took them she can be made to disgorge the treasure."

"She is now under surveillance," said the banker, which was a falsehood. "I shall have the gems safe in a little while."

Mrs. Wellington leaned back in the chair and looked away for a moment.

"It's all up for tonight at least. I shall not see a wink of sleep——"

"But the recovery of the jewels will make up for that, I'm sure."

The banker rose to go when the widow waved him down into the chair again.

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"What if you do not find the gems?" said she.

Vanderbeck knew what her words meant.

"You mean that you will hold me personally responsible?"

"Would you not do the same if you were placed in my position?"

"I gave no security for the safe keeping of the jewels."

"But you suggested that they be placed in your safe. You remember that?"

"I believe I did, but you see, my dear Mrs. Wellington, I did not dream of a catastrophe of this kind."

"Certainly not, but you were the custodian of the gems."

The banker swallowed hard.

"I must insist upon the return of the jewels or their value in cash."

"We will talk of this another time," said Vanderbeck. "You are worried just now, my friend, and you need rest."

"Which I will not have till the gems are back in my possession. More than this, I will prosecute the fair thief to the full extent of the law."

"I will join you in that. The girl cannot escape. I did not think this of Miss Cummings."

"Is that the thief's name?"

"Miss Vestal Cummings."

"Not one of the vestal virgins, I see," answered Mrs. Wellington with a grim smile.

In another moment Vanderbeck rose to depart.

"You shall be held personally responsible for the loss of the jewels," said the woman coldly, but with terrible meaning. "You will remember that. You have already set the dogs of the law at the girl's heels?"

"That has been done."

With this the banker crossed the room and at the door cast a look over his shoulder to find that Mrs. Wellington had fainted.

The banker gritted his teeth and for an instant a little smile gathered at the conners of his mouth.

When he reached the street the smile broadened, and in a little while he was seated in his carriage which whirled round the nearest corner and dashed away.

"A quarter of a million, eh?" he ejaculated. "They may have been paste for aught I know. She is a mountebank, a woman of more faces than one. Hang her accursed gems! I wish I had never seen them or their owner. I am to be held responsible, am I? Curse the creature and her wealth! As to the girl—I can lay hands on her, but the chances are that she got rid of the swag long ago. She's a cute one, and some lover had a hand in it. Denied that she robbed the safe!" And he laughed. "Why it's as plain as a dog's nose."

He settled back in quietude and for some moments said nothing.

When the vehicle set him down in front of his own home he sprang out and bounded up the steps.

He was about to enter the library when he heard a footstep behind him, and when he turned he had a folded paper thrust into his face by one of the servants.

"This was poked under the door," said the girl. "I heard a noise in front and went to the door in time to see a figure running away."

Vanderbeck took the paper and entered the library. There he opened the paper and read:

"May God forgive you for your terrible accusation. I never can. 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,' saith the Lord.

"VESTAL CUMMINGS."

The banker looked up and smiled derisively..

CHAPTER III.

THE ROAD TO THE RIVER.

What of Vestal Cummings?

The poor girl so terribly accused had hastened from the banker's house with her heart almost dead in her bosom.

The world was against her. All her fond hopes were blasted and there was nothing left to live for. Her young career had been shattered and she was under a cloud which nothing could ever lift. It seemed to her in her misery that even Heaven was against her, that all her joys had turned to naught and that she was now an outcast on the great sea of crime.

She flitted under the lights of the great city, jostled by hundreds who, if they had known her, would have turned away with a shudder. There was nothing left for her but oblivion.

Totteringly she made her way to her neat lodgings on a quiet street and opened the little door. The room had been home to her for a long time. There she had dreamed dreams of happiness and had built airy castles of hope and joy. Now all was changed. The sky was no longer fair and the thunders of disgrace rolled over her head.

For a moment she stood in the middle of the room and then tottered to her couch upon which she threw herself with a half-stifled cry. Half an hour later she came out of her swoon to find herself alone in the chamber. No one had come. She wondered why the minions of the law, the heartless law, had not come and taken her.

After awhile she sat up and her mind resumed its sway.

Presently she went over to a table and drew writing materials toward her.

For a little while she bent over the paper while she wrote with trembling hand.

The first letter read as follows and it cost her many a heartache:

"Dear Paul—It is all over. Seek not to find me. The sunshine of life has departed and I am no longer worthy to look you in the face. I have been terribly accused, but oh, the shame of it! I swear to you, Paul, in presence of that God who will some day take vengeance that I am innocent. May Heaven watch over you and never cloud your life as fate has clouded mine. Forget me if you can, Paul. But if you cannot, think of me as innocent but rash. Farewell! VESTAL."

This letter she sealed with streaming eyes and laid it aside.

Then she indited the one found underneath Lloyd Vanderbeck's door.

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Ten minutes later the poor girl had taken a final survey of her little room and stolen down the stairs. Out into the night she went, flitting from shadow to shadow as though they were the only friends she had now. Her face was drawn and deathly white. At last she reached the neighborhood o[illegible] banker's home and then the note was slipped under the door.

This work done, she turned and hastened away again. On, on she went, not pausing till she found a certain letter box into which she dropped the letter to "Paul."

The act cost her a sigh and then she resumed her flight.

The thousand-and-one lights of the great sky-scrapers looked like fireflies to her; the night wind fanned her cheeks and she felt a wild, insatiate desire at her heart, that desire for death and oblivion which comes to so many in the cities.

She was rushing toward the river. On, on with, as she thought, the minions of the law at her heels. Once or twice she looked back and thought she saw the hounds in full cry, that she almost felt their hands at her shoulders ready to drag her back and force her to face before a cruel court the terrible charges made by her late employer.

At last Vestal Cummings came in sight of the river. She saw the light-lit waters and felt an inner joy for they betokened peace to her.

She could not face the disgrace that had been heaped upon her by heartless man, nor could she turn back and proclaim her innocence before the town. They would not believe her as against the word of such a man as Lloyd Vanderbeck. Her word would weigh as nothing against his oath.

Nay, it were better that she were dead.

No one seemed to see her. There were loungers in the little park that fronted the river; no one cared for the poor distracted girl who would bury beneath the merry waters all remembrance, life itself.

"Poor Paul!" sighed Vestal. "May he forgive me, and as for the other, may God visit upon him His eternal wrath."

It was not far to the pier. She caught sight of a boat puffing in the middle of the stream and saw the lights of the sister city across the river.

Only a few steps intervened between her and the river and they would soon b[illegible]taken.

Suddenly she caught sight of a [illegible] who seemed to be watching her.

Vestal shied off a little, but did not lose sight of the stranger who appeared to move forward.

"One of the hounds of the law," she thought and then she stopped a moment to see if the man really noticed her.

He turned away a moment and she saw her chance. She sprang forward like a deer and was on the very brink of the pier.

Setting her lips hard, Vestal was in the act of throwing herself into the river when she felt her arm seized and the next instant she was pulled backward.

The girl struggled hard to loosen the man's grip.

"You must let me go!" she exclaimed. "You do not know. I did not do it. But what chance has a young girl against a nabob? I am but one and I will not be missed——"

"Now, you wouldn't do it, miss?" queried the man as he looked down into her face. "Why, they'd take you out with a hook and that would spoil your face. I've fished 'em out myself and it doesn't look nice ter see a young gal come up out o' the river with her Sunday-go-to-meetin' dress ruined. Just you take another hold on life."

"But it has no attractions for me," wailed Vestal. "You don't know what has happened, I have no right to live."

"And no right to take what God has given you—your life."

Vestal started.

That was true. She had not looked at it in that light. It seemed to burst upon her like a revelation. She had no right to take her life. It was not hers; it belonged to the Giver of all life. The man was right.

"I'm not a saint myself," grinned the man, who was poorly clad. "But I'm no fool when it comes to a thing o' this sort. I'm only Jack the Vulture. But even I have something to live for."

He had escorted Vestal from the edge of the pier and was looking into her white face as she breathed hard.

"You'll not do it if I let you go?" he queried. "You'll resolve not to try again?"

A change had come over the girl.

"I promise," said she.

Then I'll let ye go," resumed the man. "Where do you live?"

"Never mind that," was the reply.

"Oh, well, just as you please about that," and the man grinned. "Just so you don't try that foolish trick over. There you are, miss," and she was free.

For a moment Vestal stood in the light and looked into her preserver's face.

"Remember Jack the Vulture. I'm no saint, girl. Mebbe we'll meet again. Good night," and the speaker touched his hat while Vestal turned away.

Now what should she do? She thought of the two letters, especially of the one she had written to Paul.

It was too late to recall it. He would get it in the morning, but she could not meet him face to face.

Whither could she go? At last she flitted back from the river in which she had almost buried all her sorrows. She went up through the shadows again and the darker one was still upon her soul.

Back to the little room? No, she could not go there. The minions of the law, Lloyd Vanderbeck's bloodhounds, would find her and she would be arrested.

An hour passed away. Vestal Cummings had not gone home. Her sorrow had not abated and deep in her heart was that shadow that has cost the lives of the innocent.

The dread night had nearly vanished when a silent figure paused at the foot of a stair. Over the doorway was a transparent sign which told people that Madame Zenobia, the celebrated seeress, held forth at that place. It was a forbidding looking entrance, but, shutting her teeth hard, the figure at the foot of the stair entered and disappeared.

That person was Vestal Cummings.

CHAPTER IV.

PAUL.

It was ten o'clock the next day when the door of Lloyd Vanderbeck's office opened and a young man entered. He found the banker-broker alone.

The visitor was a person of five and twenty, good looking, well built and the possessor of a pair of brown-black eyes that spoke of great courage.

He closed the door carefully behind him while the banker turned in his chair and looked up at him.

Vanderbeck inwardly disapproved of the coolness of the young man in entering the room without being announced and a scowl settled on his face.

"Who are you and what is your business?" he growled.

"I will answer both questions at the same time," was the reply. "My name is Paul Partland and I am here to inquire about the young lady who is your amanuensis."

"Miss Cummings?"

"Yes. She is in your employ, is she not?"

"She was until lately. She has left my employ."

"I inferred so from a letter just received from her."

"Then you are the man in the case?" insinuated Vanderbeck. His manner was haughty and most provoking.

"The man in the case?" echoed Paul. "I do not quite understand and you will oblige me by explaining."

"I will have to say that explanation will be made ere long in the police court."

The face of Paul Partland went white.

"You do not mean to say that Vestal has betrayed her trust?" he almost gasped.

"Worse than that, sir. The girl has played the part of thief."

In an instant Paul was at the banker's side and his glance seemed to read his inmost soul.

"Beware!" said he in startling tones. "You must not accuse her of villainy while I am her protector."

"Ah, that is the relation you bear to her?" cried the banker. "It seems to me, sir, that you are liable to get your foot in it, too."

"What is the charge against her?"

"It's serious enough I'm thinking. One of my friends, a certain Mrs. Wellington, had a lot of gems in that safe yonder and they turned up missing. That's all."

"And you accuse Miss Cummings of the crime?"

"There's no doubt of it."

"What is the proof?"

"No persons but the young lady and myself knew of the combination. The gems vanished and she is a fugitive. Do you want any more proof?"

"Bless your life, that's no proof," said Paul. "Who knows but that you took the jewels yourself?"

Vanderbeck turned white and stammered.

"Have a care!" he exclaimed. "The police are within call."

"Call them in," coolly answered Paul whose heart had risen indignantly in his bosom. "Men call you the Gold Wolf and from what I have heard of you you deserve the name. You have driven your victim to her death. She may have buried the disgrace you have heaped upon her in the river."

"Then she is beyond the pale of the law," heartlessly said the man in the revolving chair. "I guess this concludes the interview unless you know what she did with the gems."

"I, sir? You despicable monster! Will you add insult to injury?" and the hand of Paul Partland fell heavily upon the nabob's shoulder. "I ought to throttle the life out of you right here in your gold lair. You have blighted the life of one of the purest women that ever lived. You are one of the money leeches that, for some unknown reason, are permitted to curse the earth. Guilty? Never! Vestal Cummings never thought of touching the gems. She was as honest as the day is long. An impure thought never entered her mind. I should leave you dead with your infamous lie on your tongue!"

Paul nearly lifted the man out of the chair. His grip was that of a giant and the white-faced banker fell back and stared at the young man.

"Vestal ought to live for your blood!" he went on. "You have coolly blighted her life without the slightest compunction and I believe I will show you that she has at least one friend left in this world."

With this he lifted the terrified man out of the chair and before Vanderbeck could breathe the second time he was flung from Paul's clutches and landed against the wall from which he slid to the floor.

Paul stepped back and surveyed his work.

"Not as much as he deserved!" he commented to himself as Vanderbeck gasped on the carpet. "The next time it will be a little more severe. This is only the first lesson," and with this he took another look at the banker and quitted the place.

Out on the street with the fresh wind on his face the young man hastened away.

The letter Vestal had written him had sent a nameless chill to his heart and the blackest fears had taken possession of it. He had visited Vestal's late lodgings before making his appearance in Gold street and had found them untenanted. Mrs. Morris, the caretaker, informed him that she knew nothing of the girl's whereabouts, saying that she had heard her in her room some time during the night, but could not say just when.

Perplexed and fearful, with Vestal's letter in his pocket, Paul went away. What had become of the girl? The tenderness of her last letter filled him with new fears and he went toward the river. It flowed cold and loveless between its shores and for some time Paul gazed upon its waters with a heart at low ebb in his breast.

Where was Vestal?

Discouraged he retraced his steps. Why had he not asked Vanderbeck for the full name of the owner of the jewels?

He thought of going back to the Gold Wolf's office for this information, but did not.

Had the nabob set the police after Vestal? Had he carried out his infamous scheme of ruin thus far?

Paul wandered over the stones of the great city for hours like one half bereft of reason. He thought of a thousand things. Once he went to the morgue, but the cold slabs that bore the pitiful forms of unfortunate humanity did not reveal the white face of Vestal Cummings.

Then he sought the police, but they knew nothing of the girl. She was as lost to him as though she rested on the floor of the heartless river.

It was a long day to the distracted young man.

Slowly night again settled over the city. Paul waited impatiently for the last editions of the evening papers.

Feverishly he picked up the first one that came to his hand.

There it was!

Bold headlines, and as heartless as they were bold, told the terrible story he looked for.

The gems belonged to Mrs. Eudora Wellington and the thief was Miss Vestal Cummings, employed by Lloyd Vanderbeck, the prominent banker of Gold street.

The girl had vanished with her plunder and as yet had not been found. But her arrest was but a question of time and there was no doubt that the jewels would in time be restored to their rightful owner.

Paul's brain swam as he read the terrible story. It could not be. Had not Vestal written him that she was innocent? Had she not sworn it by her Maker? He would believe her, but the story told by the papers was a dreadful one.

He put the paper down at last and rushed out of the restaurant where he had read it.

He must find Vestal.

Somewhere she was nursing her disgrace alone, with none to pity and no hand stretched out to save.

All at once Paul paused on the pavement. Two men were talking in rather low tones at his elbow and the first word he caught sent his heart with a bound into his throat.

"It was the girl, no doubt," said one of the men. "She told me she was innercent and I gave her some good advice."

"You did, eh, Jack?" said the other. "Mebbe she had the swag with her at the time. You don't know what you missed."

"I wouldn't hev robbed her if I had knowed she had ten million on her person. She was nearly out o' her blessed head. That war the same girl, Ratty."

With this the men were moving off when Paul sprang toward them and caught the one called Jack by the arm.

"I am looking for that girl!" cried he. "She is my dearest friend and—and——"

"Listen to that, will yer, Ratty? This bloke wants ter know about the young gal I saved from the river last night," and the speaker broke into a rough laugh.

"Tell me where she is," pleaded Paul. "I must find her. I must save Vestal Cummings from the doom that threatens."

This dramatic story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very startling episodes and situations. Its perusal to the end will highly reward you. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly advised to send in the price of subscription at once. If you do so, we will be glad to send you free one of our King Cameras or any six patterns you may select from our pattern page. Look at our advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

PUZZLED.

BY ALICE CUNNINGHAM.

A woman's "No," means "Yes," they say,
Likewise her "Yes" means "No."
I have proposed unto a maid—
And now my lot is woe.

For as I pled with Mary dear
Her soft cheeks' rosy glow
Caused me to think my joy complete—
Her answer would be "No!"

But when I begged her tenderly
With love my life to bless,
The shy maid looked up with a laugh
And softly answered, "Yes!"

THE BRIDAL TOUR.

BY EDWARD MINTURN.

The Marchesa Baliscata, one of the wealthiest noblesse in Calabria, herself a widow in the full prime of matronly beauty, had consented to the betrothal of Elise her only daughter, to the Conde de Varadelli, but she insisted on the marriage taking place with a pomp and ceremony befitting the rank and wealth of the family, in the capital of the kingdom.

This, too, when roads were infested with armed bands of robbers to such a degree that no one dared travel except under a heavy military escort. The bride and groom both sought to alter the determination of the noble Marchesa, but it was useless—she had a will as imperious as that of the first Napoleon, and no obstacle ever impeded it.

Great preparation was therefore made—bride and bridegroom—the stately Marchesa, with at least a hundred attendants, in carriages and on horseback, the gentlemen all well armed, set out from the stately country palace of the Marchesa on a sunny morning in June.

The air was aromatic with the breath of flowers, cool breezes swept down from the mountains, and the sparkling rills on either hand gave sweet accompaniment in their rippling chorus to the songs of birds and rustling branches.

For miles they rode, seeing no peril, and becoming more gay and noisy as their apprehensions vanished.

They approached a narrow ravine near the Ponte di Bovino, whence they could see the open plains where they would be free from the last thought of attack, and here a large body of well-armed, mounted and masked men blocked their way.

Half of their own armed men retreated in terror at the sight, just in time to escape being intercepted by a band closing in on the rear of the party.

The Marchesa, now regretting her own imprudence, for half her wealth in jewels was on the persons of her daughter and herself, trembled with apprehension, for the robbers were fierce and terrible looks. But two, dressed magnificently, rode forward, and, bowing low, said, in respectful tones:

"You have nothing to fear, noble Marchesa, for yourself or your lovely daughter, so far as life and honor is concerned. You are in the hands of gentlemen, faithful subjects of a monarch you disown, the noble Ferdinand IV. But, noble Marchesa, we and our comrades are needy, and we must have our wants supplied by those who are wealthy like yourself. Therefore, your money and jewels must be delivered up, and we must retain you and your party until a ransom of one hundred thousand scudi is paid."

The Marchesa sighed. The jewels and the ransom, even with her large estates left, would leave her, in her own estimation, literally poverty-stricken. Yet those bold, desperate men held life, honor, all that life was worth, and even more, at their mercy.

She dared not hesitate. Her bags of gold, containing that which was to defray the expenses of the coming ceremony, were drawn forth from their hiding-place in the great family coach. Two caskets of precious jewels followed. But even now they were not to go on—but to be detained for further ransom.

Suddenly, by an accident, the mask of one of the leaders fell.

The Marchesa saw a face she thought she recognized. The man blushed to the very temples. He had once been a valued and faithful servant to her noble husband, and for some fancied affront had left his service.

She looked at him earnestly, but did not speak. He saw that he was recognized, and a tear fell on his bronzed cheek as he remembered many a former kindness rendered by an indulgent mistress.

He turned aside and called the other leader to him. They consulted long and earnestly, and apparently for a time with dissenting views.

While this discussion was going on, the whole party under close guard, a robber undertook to take the rich diamond eardrops from the bride's ears. She screamed, and the chief who once had served in the family saw the act which caused her terror.

Not quicker the lightning-flash from the thunder-cloud than the speed with which his sword left its scabbard, and the miscreant fell dead at the feet of the bride, while the chief, in a tone of thunder, cried:

"So dies any one who dares to raise a hand against a woman of this party!"

He then turned to his comrade, and renewed his argument. The result proved his power, and that his heart was not so steeped in crime as to forget a better, brighter past.

He and his brother chief came forward and said:

"Noble Marchesa, because you are rich and can well spare it, we shall keep the gold we have taken to give to our needy men. But because you are good, we restore your jewels, that their luster may not be missed in the coming ceremony, which is to make two young hearts happy. We will not detain you, either, for a ransom, because time to you is precious, and our accommodations are far too rude for the gentle and fair, though good enough for us. You are free to pass on, and we will send one with you who will see that no other interruption takes place in your journey."

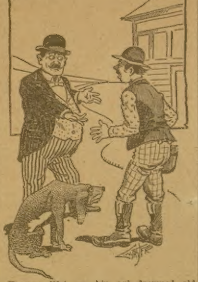
The Marchesa, astonished and gratified, unbent herself from her pride so far as to warmly thank Gaetano—Don Gaetano his adherents called him—for his noble conduct; and, taking a costly ring from her finger, she placed it in his hand, and said:

"If peril ever should so environ thee that escape seems impossible, send me this token and, if it takes all my wealth, thou shalt be saved."

Weeping, the robber chief kissed the hand of the noble lady, and asked the saints to guard and bless her in her journey.

The cortege now reformed, passed safely on, and soon, in the capital, the marriage ceremony was performed with all the pomp and show which the Marchesa could display.

She never saw Gaetano again, for soon after, in a dissension among his own men, caused by his wish to leave that kind of life, he fell by the hand of the brother of the man whom he slew, as described above, when attempting to rob the bride.



Farmer—Wot yer bin an' drowned old Nell's pups for, idiot?

Idiot—'Cos they warn't no good; they wos born blind!

New Game.

It was midnight when the shabby individual entered the little lunchroom near the bridge.

"Boss," he announced boldly, "I want a 'white-cap sandwich.' "

"I've heard of lots of sandwiches in my time," yawned the sleepy proprietor, "but a 'white-cap sandwich' is certainly one on me. How do you make it up?"

"Well, you take two thick slices of chicken, a slice of roast beef and a raw tomato. Then you add some lettuce and sauce."

"That's a queer mixture, pardner, but I guess our chef can make it."

Five minutes later he returned from the kitchen with the "white-cap sandwich" and the shabby individual devoured it to the last crumb.

"That was pretty good, mister," he remarked, rising from the table.

"That so? But how in the world did it get the name of 'white-cap' sandwich?"

"Why, you see, boss, it is always on the chef."

And then the shabby individual "beat it."

QUIT WHITE BREAD

Could Not Get Strength From It.

A Yorkstate minister, who is interested not only in the spiritual welfare of his congregation, but in their physical well-being, says:

"I can now do an immense amount of work and feel no fatigue, for the reason that I am using Grape-Nuts food and have quit coffee entirely and am using Postum Food Coffee in its place.

"Myself and family are all greatly improved in health. We have largely abandoned the use of white bread. Upwards of twenty-five persons have changed their diet on my recommendation. It is gladly given, because I know, from personal experience, whereof I speak."

It is a well-known fact that white bread is almost entirely composed of starch and this is difficult of digestion by many people, particularly those who have weak intestinal digestion. The result of the use of much white bread is a lack of brain and nervous power to do mental work and it also creates intestinal troubles, because the excess of starch ferments in the intestines and makes the condition right for the growth of microbes; whereas Grape-Nuts food contains the needed starch, but in a pre-digested form. That is, it is transformed into grape-sugar in the process of manufacture, and delivered in the packages, ready cooked and in such shape that it is immediately assimilated without hard work of the digestive organs.

The food also contains the delicate particles of phosphate of potash which, combined with albumen, is used by Nature to make the gray matter in the cells of the brain and the nerve centres throughout the body, in order to give strength and ability to stand long and continuous work. "There's a Reason." Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

The Same Thing.

Officer Hausmann was noted on the force for his soft heart. Pacing one day back and forth in his blue coat, swinging his club, he saw some distance away a woman reel dizzily for a moment and then seat herself unsteadily on the curbstone. She was poorly dressed and carried a large basket.

The officer hurried to her. "Madam," he said, in his most sympathetic tones, "have you vertigo?"

Lifting an anxious face to his, she replied wearily, "About five blocks."

Free Deafness Cure.

A remarkable offer made by one of the leading ear specialists in this country. Dr. Branaman offers to all applying at once two full months' medicine to prove his ability to cure permanently Deafness, Head Noises and Catarrh in every stage. Address Dr. G. M. Branaman, 1283 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Mo.

In His Line.

"The camel is not as much of an attraction as he was."

"No; it keeps him humping to get people to notice him."

Great Binder Twine Offer.

If you have any use for binder twine this season, don't fail to write us and get our great binder twine offer before buying elsewhere.

We have binder twine stored in warehouses in various parts of the country, so we can get the twine to you in just a day or two after we receive your order. We have a special price and a most extraordinary binder twine offer we want you to be sure to receive before you buy a pound of twine.

Write us a postal card or letter and simply say: "Mail me your binder twine offer," and our great twine offer will be sent you by mail, postpaid, at once, together with a price quotation that will mean a great saving, protection and assurance to you.

Address SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., CHICAGO.

If He Had the Sand.

We fuss about the girls because
A blushing tint shows through
When they go out upon the street
Adorned in peekaboo.
If man were not so modest he
Would wear the cool rig, too.

Map of the World 25 Cents.

A beautiful map, valuable for reference, printed on heavy paper, 42x64 inches, mounted on rollers, edges bound in cloth, showing our new island possessions, the Trans-Siberian Railway, Pacific Ocean cables, railway lines and other features of Japan, China, Manchuria, Korea and the Far East. Sent on receipt of 25 cents in stamps by W. B. Kniskern, P. T. M. Chicago & North-Western Railway, Chicago, Ill.

He Was Right.

"There is a beautiful woman, but what is she good for?" sneered the cynic.

"Well," replied his companion, "I would be willing to bet that she could make a hundred dollar salary look like thirty cents."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

THE EARL'S LOVE;

A CANADIAN IDYL.

By Granville Osborne.

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Begun in No. 28, July 13. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER IV.

Melancholy Jim sat smoking a solitary pipe in front of his log fire. His nickname was more appropriate than ever now, for the trouble which followed St. Valentine's Ball had told on his spirits to such a degree that his face seemed to have lengthened considerably, and his eyes to have grown more dismal-looking than ever.

In past days he had always been sure of Secret Charlie's company in the long winter evenings, and though his faith in his friend had undergone such a severe shock, it nevertheless went against the grain to see Globe-trotting John come into the room and take the empty chair the outcast man had always filled.

But he held his peace. For more than half an hour the two comrades sat on and smoked in silence, and it was not until a loud-ticking clock on the shelf pointed to eleven that either of them opened their lips.

It was John who first broke the long pause.

"It's been a long winter," he remarked.

The words were spoken apropos of nothing, but Jim knew the motive which had prompted them as well as if it had been stated as an actual fact.

"Yes," he replied, with a sigh. "And there doesn't seem much prospect of things brightening either."

The other gave a hollow laugh.

"The moving spirit of enterprise has gone, I suppose?" he said. "It's strange how little one realizes a man's personality and claims to distinction until he's departed."

Jim took a long pull at his pipe.

"Secret Charles has taken the life of the homestead with him," he said after another pause.

"Yes," passing his long fingers slowly and thoughtfully down his beard. "Young Carstairs suggested getting up a big sleighing party to run over to the falls one day this week, but when I passed on the idea to Snowflake, she said she would rather not be included."

Jim took no more pulls at his pipe. He put it down on the nearest shelf, and fixed his eyes on the log fire.

"Do you think she has changed at all since—since St. Valentine's Ball?" he asked hesitatingly, much in the same way as one puts out a feeler in deep water.

John's eyelashes flickered on his weather-beaten cheek.

"She's growing older, I suppose," he said evasively.

Jim gave a restless movement.

"Perhaps that is it," he replied with a vain attempt at self assurance. "We forget she's no longer the little child we found in the drift."

Another short silence followed. It was somewhat pathetic the way in which each man fenced with his growing fear, but they were both conquered in the end.

"You—you don't think she's ill, do you?" asked John, putting out another feeler. "She's so much thinner and paler lately, and her step has lost its spring."

Jim set his lips together, then he passed his hands across his brow.

"Ill!" he burst out, with sudden passion. "Yes, I do think so. It's no use shutting our eyes to the truth any longer. The child is wasting away; she's eating her heart out for the pity and grief of things, and unless we get her out of this place soon she'll die before our very sight." John rose from his chair. He felt better now the foils were put away, and they stood face to face with the naked truth.

"But how is it to be done?" he asked miserably. "Traveling costs money, and there's little enough to spare."

John dropped his head on his folded arms.

"I know," he replied brokenly. "The fact has been gnawing at my heart-strings for days. It was a bad season, and there isn't an extra penny one can well afford, and what's to be the end of it I can't tell."

John shivered a little, but before he could speak again, the door was thrown open roughly and Sunny Hal rushed into the room.

"Snowflake sent me for you," he cried breathlessly. "There has been an accident, and a sleigh with a lady and gentleman inside, turned right over just outside the cottage door. The man isn't hurt, but the lady has got a nasty knock on the head, and John is to go round at once."

Globe-trotting John had studied medicine in his youth, so he put on his slouch hat at once, and went with his two comrades to the cottage where the injured lady had been carried.

They found her lying insensible in the small sitting-room, with old Mrs. Warren standing helplessly behind, while Snowflake knelt beside the sofa, supporting her head against her arm, and striving to comfort the anxious, fidgeting husband.

John put his fingers on the limp wrist.

"It's nothing more than a slight concussion," he said reassuringly. "Get me a piece of ice for her head, and she'll come round in no time. All right, my friend"—as the husband looked helplessly round in search of the prescribed item. "Ice is a commodity which Cascade City seldom falls short of at this time of the year."

The stranger heaved a sigh of relief. "I am needlessly nervous, perhaps," he said in a worried voice, "but my wife has been very ill lately, and we are traveling solely on her account. I am extremely thankful for your kind assistance in the emergency. My name is Henry Charteris, and you will not find me ungrateful."

John gave him a kindly word, for his voice betrayed education and refinement, and the priceless sables in which his wife was enveloped spoke undoubtedly of ample means.

"We're quite accustomed to help one another in these parts," he said. "It's but a piece of our own code, and no credit to us either. See, your wife is coming round now, and showing life again. A day or two's rest and you'll be able to continue your journey with safety."

As he spoke, the lady stirred slightly, and the color crept back into her white cheeks. A moment later, and she opened her eyes and fastened them wonderingly on Snowflake's beautiful young face as she bent anxiously over her.

"Where am I?" she asked faintly.

Her husband knelt down beside her.

"You are among friends," he said. "They have kindly brought you into their house and seen after you."

She looked from him to Snowflake again, with a yearning expression in her sad eyes.

"I dreamed I was back in England," she whispered, "and when I saw that young face bending over me, I thought the dream was true."

Her husband rose to his feet again, with a short sigh.

"My wife had a great trouble at home," he explained to Jim, as he stood watching by the fire. "She lost her only child—a girl as young and lovely as this one, and the sight of her brings back her terrible grief."

"Poor soul!" muttered Jim sympathetically. "We can send the girl away if you think it better."

But at the mere suggestion Mrs. Charteris showed visible signs of uneasiness. She seemed to have taken a sudden fancy for the young stranger and even after a three days' rest at the cottage, when Globe-trotting John gave her permission to continue the journey, she was very loth to leave her new friend.

"I suppose Snowflake reminds her of her own daughter," remarked Jim to his two comrades when they were smoking as usual over the fire a week later, and the strangers still stayed on at the cottage. "She's never happy when she is out of her sight."

Hal put his hands in his pockets, and answered nothing. If Jim had grown more melancholy, and John had forgotten how to laugh—the erstwhile man of sunshine had forfeited his claim to his title for good and all.

"It's given the child something fresh to think about," went on the elder man reflectively. "Perhaps she'll cheer up after this and be herself again."

"Never!" burst out Hal impulsively.

"She'll never be the child she used to be, for she's tasted of the waters of Marah, and the Dead Sea fruit is sticking in her throat. If I could only do something to help her—something to comfort her—but, as you know, she won't look at me. Whether she's dying of the shame of things, or dying of love for the man who deceived her, is a thing we shall never know, but dying she surely is, and unless something is done to change her thoughts and surroundings the child will leave us before the spring sets in."

The other two gripped their hands together. They were only their own thoughts put into words by another man, but the second endorsement seemed to clench the matter beyond dispute, and to sear their hearts like a firebrand.

A knock at the door brought an interruption to their direful distress, and when Henry Charteris entered the room, they turned stolid faces toward him, which gave little indication of the state of mind within.

"You must forgive my intrusion," began the newcomer in his courteous way, "but my wife and I are leaving Cascade City tomorrow morning, and I have come round to give you my heartfelt thanks for your kindness and hospitality."

They waved aside the words with the open-handed charity of the men of the West.

"We are only too glad to be of any use,' replied Jim, taking up the post of spokesman, "and we sincerely hope you will carry a pleasant impression of the place away with you."

The stranger made a restless movement and leaned his arm on the smoke-grimed mantlepiece. "I hope I shall have reason to be grateful to you and the place all my life," he said somewhat enigmatically.

The other three looked at him wonderingly, so he relinquished his leaning attitude and faced them boldly.

"I had better speak out at once," he said, "and not deal in hints and innuendoes. I came for another reason besides my desire to show my gratitude. I came to make you an offer."

They stared back at him gravely. If they guessed what was coming they made no sign.

"I want to know," he went on nervously—"I came to ask you if you will give us your ward?"

The fact was out at last. They had seen the offer dancing in his eyes; they had heard it in the hesitation of his voice, and not one of them had a word with which to meet it.

"My wife has set her heart on it," he continued fearsomely; "and I need not tell you that if you agree to let her go she will be no less our child than the one who was taken away from us a few months ago. She will enjoy advantages which she can never get here. She will have all the benefits of the first masters of England, and mix with cultured men and women of the world. Moreover, we are very wealthy, and"—with a slight break in his voice—"there is no one else. If you give us Snowflake she will be the sole heiress to everything we possess, and she will also take our name."

A dead silence followed his words. After their dire need of the moment before, this offer seemed like a message sent direct from Heaven, and yet the three recipients stood and listened to it as if it were a bolt from a lower world.

"I will ask you not to decide too hastily," went on the other with restrained eagerness. "It means a terrible deprivation for you, I know, and I do not wish to appear as a thief in your midst, who takes advantage of your unequalled kindness, and then tries to rob you of your most prized possession. But, on the other hand, there is Snowflake's future to be considered as well as your own. She can have little chances in this tiny, isolated spot, and with us she will have countless, and I need not tell you, that our hearts are open to her as well as our purses, and that we will love her as if she were our own."

Jim's arms fell lifelessly to his sides, then he rose to his feet with a heavy, dragging movement.

"Mr. Charteris," he said, with a gruffness which was put on to cover other things, "if we considered ourselves only, we should never let the child pass out of our keeping, but, as you rightly say, there is her future to face as well as our own, and I answer for my comrades as well as myself, that we will not stand in her light. We were wanting a change for her, but our purses are small, and we could not manage it. You have solved the difficulty, and given her a chance such as we have never dreamed of. Take her away tomorrow before our hearts fail us, and speak of a visit only, or she would not go. For the child loves her grim guardians, and"—his voice failing suddenly—"and will feel the break."

Henry Charteris strode forward and grasped the three hands one after another.

"It need not be a long break," he said, "for you will come over to England and see her often. She shall still be your child as well as ours. God bless you for your goodness, and God reward you!"

He turned away to go round the cottage and bear the joyful tidings to his wife, and though he knew something of Snowflake's guardians, he guessed little of the terrible grief and desolation he had left behind.

It was Hal who opened the door for him, and John who gave him the last nod, but Jim stood close to the fireplace, and did not move.

They listened to the echo of his footsteps as they had done once before with Secret Charles and their faces turned gray.

"Have we done right?" whispered John hoarsely, turning towards the man by the fireplace, with a forced effort.

But he got no answer, for Melancholy Jim had thrown his head on his arms, and was crying like a little child.

CHAPTER [illegible]

"Help! help!"

The cry broke the mighty stillness of the mountain, and echoed away across the valley. Secret Charles turned in his saddle with a wondering face, and gazed expectantly through the snow-lined pass as he continued his lonely wandering, about three weeks after his banishment.

He was grateful for anything in the shape of distraction. Even this weird cry was welcome as a change from the torturing, self-reproachful thoughts which goaded his mind to madness. For now that the actual fever had died down, and the time for sober reflection had arrived, Secret Charles looked deep down into the recesses of his heart, and knew himself for what he was.

And presently the cry came again.

"Help! help!"

He could judge its whereabouts the second time, and, after dismounting and tying up his horse to a stout bough, he picked his way through the rocky boulders until he came to an opening a hundred yards beyond.

A gruesome sight met his eyes there, for a man was lying disabled on the cold ground, while a patient horse stood beside him sniffing at the glacier-like path which had evidently proved the cause of the accident.

Charles hastened his steps to where he lay.

"What is the matter?" he asked compassionately.

The man raised himself heavily on his elbow. He was quite young, and could barely have been twenty-six summers, but there was a look of strength on the clear-cut features which made him old beyond his years.

"I got off the track," he explained in a spent voice. "My horse slipped, and threw me on the ice. I fear there is a broken ankle as a result, for I cannot move without agony, and much less stand."

Charles looked round a little vaguely. They were in a lonely part of the range, and an hour's distance from any help.

"How came you to be riding here all alone?" he asked, with a puzzled glance at the fresh clear face, which showed no signs of long sojourn under Canadian skies. "You do not look as if you belonged to the country."

The other smiled faintly.

"No more I do," he said. "I am only just out from England. I had two Indians with me, but they sneaked off when they saw my plight."

Charles gave a grunt of angry disgust.

"Here, take a pull at my flask," he said, drawing it out of his pocket, "and then I'll get you on to your horse somehow. An hour's ride will bring us to Deerholme, a small township at the end of the range."

It took some little time, for the man was stiff and cold from his long wait on the snow track, and his hurt was very painful; but Charles succeeded in the end, and so arranged the injured foot that it should be shaken as little as possible as they slowly traversed the distance to Deerholme. When they finally arrived there and found a vacant room at the small hostelry, he got him to bed as soon as possible, and then set off in search of the nearest medical aid.

"I can never thank you enough," said the young man gratefully. "If it had not been for you I should have died of cold in the pass. My name is Devon Garnier. Will you tell me yours?"

Charles turned his head with a start, and for one full moment he looked at the face on the pillow without a word, then he moved slowly round again, and remained with his eyes on the window in a fixed stare.

"I have no name," he said slowly. "I am on my way to make one."

The other smiled at the reply, but he was too tactful to press the point.

"Have you been in Canada long?" he asked.

"More than fifteen years."

"Oh! Then perhaps you can help me in my search. I am over here, trying to find a long-lost brother. Have you in your wanderings come across a man named Carrington Garnier?"

Charles leaned against the window frame.

"What was he like?" he asked.

"I cannot tell you. He left his home many years ago in disgrace and heavy money difficulties, while my father only consented to settle on condition he cut the entail and went away forever."

"Then why do you want to find him?"

Charles' voice seemed suddenly to have taken a hoarse tone which was very foreign to it.

"Because, in spite of the agreement, I do not consider that I have any right to step into his shoes whilst he still lives. A man may be wild and extravagant in his youth, but he should be given space to repent, and although he signed away his birthright, he could not do the same with the title. Therefore, if Carrington still lives, he is the Earl of Lasnorth."

Charles' dark eyes took a blacker hue than usual. They seemed to cast a sombre haze over his whole face. For one minute he stood in mute irresolution by the window, and then he turned round, with a sudden impulsive movement, and gripped hold of the top of the bedstead.

"Carrington Garnier no longer lives to cumber the earth," he said hurriedly. "He came over to Canada in the eighties and tried to make a living in various ways, but there wasn't much good in him"—with a mirthless laugh—"and so he drifted under the stream, and—and sank in deep water."

Devon started up on his pillow. For the time being he had forgotten the pain in his foot.

"You know this for a certainty?" he questioned breathlessly.

Charles nodded.

"Yes, for a certainty."

"And you knew him personally?"

Charles nodded again.

"To my own undoing."

Devon fell back with a weary sigh.

"You mean that you suffered through his fault?"

"Yes."

"Then you must let me make it up to you. You must let me try and show my gratitude for all you have done for me as well."

The face before him set itself in stern, dark lines.

"Thank you," he said; "you mean it kindly, but I can accept nothing. If I suffered through Carrington Garnier it was no less my own weakness than his."

"Oh!" cried the young man eagerly. "You must reconsider that. You must think better of it. I could not go away and feel that an unpaid debt was left behind."

"There is no question of debt," replied Charles grimly. "Carrington Garnier paid it in in full by his own suffering. You may be quite sure"—with a bitter laugh—"that when a man sins the wages will come home to him sooner or later."

Devon looked back at the prematurely-aged face with visible sorrow, for there was an expression in the eyes which made him full of a great compassion.

"I shall not take that for an answer," he said, "for I shall worry you so much that in sheer weariness you will let me have my way."

But neither then nor at any time during

the few days they stayed together at the little hostelry could he persuade Charles to alter his mind and accept assistance.

"It is pure obstinacy on your part," he said disappointedly, when his ankle had so far recovered that he was well enough to be carried down to the coffee-room. "You have done me a huge and double service, and yet you will not let me show my gratitude."

Charles took no notice of the reproach. He only looked at the landlord-waiter busily setting a second table at the other side.

"Are you expecting any more visitors?" he asked somewhat curiously.

The man turned at once.

"Yes, sir. A party of three and two servants over from Cascade City. They arrive in half an hour."

Charles' lips fell apart. For a short space of time he did not speak.

"Bring me my bill at once," he called at last, as the landlord went off in search of more knives, "and have my horse brought round in twenty minutes."

The man nodded assentingly, but Devon's face fell several degrees.

"Why this sudden change of plans?" he asked. "You had no thought of going this morning."

"Ah, you do not know me yet," he said caustically. "You are not aware that all my movements are sudden and erratic. But I have been idle long enough. The time has come for me to buckle on my armor and move on."

"When shall I see you again?"

He shook his head vaguely.

"That is more than I can tell you. I do not know where my next march may take me."

"Then will you promise me something?" asked Devon. "Will you promise me that, if ever you set foot in England again, you will come straight to me at Lasnorth Castle, in the County of Somerset?"

For a moment Charles hesitated. He seemed to be battling with some great desire. Then he threw his head back, with a stifled sigh, and held out his hand.

"Yes," he said, "I will promise you that, and now, good-by! It may be for years, it may be forever; but let me tell you this before I go—that you can enjoy your family honors with an unruffled mind. Carrington Garnier was weak and selfish, and unfitted for the position to which he was born. See that you do better for the old name. See that you hold it forever in honor, that neither you nor yours shall leave a stain upon it! See that you so rule your kingdom that the taint of the elder brother is wiped out and forgotten!"

He took the outstretched hand and wrung it, then he strode away to the door, where his horse was waiting. A moment later and the sound of quick trotting hoofs was echoing across the valley, and before the last sound had died away a sleigh with four horses came jingling down the snow-lined street, and pulled up before the hotel door.

Devon turned his head with a listless glance to watch the occupants alight. A tall man with slouch hat over his ears came first, and then a lady muffled up in sables, and after her a young girl with a face as white as the driven snow, and lips which showed as carmine in contrast to her wondrous skin. He felt a sudden pleasurable anticipation in the thought of seeing her closer, but when the trio entered the coffee-room his expectation changed to startled wonder and recognition, and he held out his hand with a smile of pleasure.

"Mr. and Mrs. Charteris!" he cried delightedly.

"What, Devon—you?" was the response in wondering tones. "But whatever brings you here?"

"I might ask the same question," he replied laughingly. "For one hardly expects to come over to the other side of the world and meet one's next-door neighbors."

"But it is only a small world after all," interposed Henry Charteris, with a look of amusement. "We were just traveling round, and so were you, and Fate ordained we should meet in the same spot. I have no doubt we shall find later on that there was some great wisdom in the ruling of it."

"But what has turned you into an invalid?" asked Mrs. Charteris, her motherly instinct all alert at the sight of him tied on the sofa.

"Just a broken ankle," he replied, "nothing more. My horse slipped on the ice and threw me. I came out to find about my long lost brother and by some curious coincidence alighted on a man who knew him, and who told me of his death."

"Then you may as well join forces with us now and let us all go home together. Let me introduce you to a new member of the family—our adopted daughter. Lord Lasnorth—Miss Hope Charteris. We have called her that, because she has given my husband and me a new interest in life."

The girl held out her hand with a natural grace, and looked back at him with eyes which caught his glance and held it. Had he ever seen such beauty before, he wondered?

"I think it is a most excellent suggestion of yours," he replied, in answer to Mrs. Charteris' first remark. "I will join forces with you with all the pleasure in the world."

CHAPTER VI.

"You could not have come at a better moment, for you have arrived just a week before my wedding. I shall, therefore, be able to introduce you to the loveliest girl in the world." And Lord Lasnorth shook his friend's hand with genuine warmth, and led him into the grand old castle which for generations had borne his name.

Secret Charles looked around him furtively. Worldly affairs had prospered with him since he left Cascade City. It's a little way things have when the others have run down to zero, and life holds little interest one way or the other, for he had been the first discoverer of the famous Sutherland silver mine in British Columbia, and was one of the largest share holders ever since the company was launched in London.

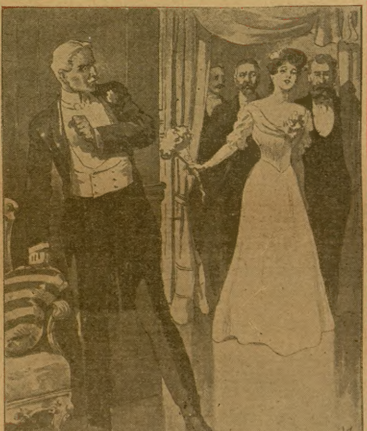
He wrote himself Charles Sutherland, now, and very few people would have recognized him as the man who had been driven from Cascade City in the teeth of the storm; for his hair was white as the snow in which he had so nearly met his death, and his dark, grave face was lined and old.

Lord Lasnorth told himself that had he met him unawares he would have passed him by unrecognized, for even his great square strength seemed to have shrunk and lessened; while the gaunt, hollow cheeks and the hacking cough betrayed only too plainly that the disease which too often follows a hard spell of years in a severe climate, had gripped him beyond the power of science or of effort.

But he was still as secret as ever. His new comrades knew as little as the old of what was passing in his silent mind, and not one of them guessed that there was one great object in his life towards which he was working and striving, or that his thoughts held little else besides.

"I must see her again," he would breathe to himself over and over again. "I must find her and ask her forgiveness. It is all I live for now—all I hope for."

But it was easier said than done, for Snowflake seemed to have disappeared off the face of the earth. He had made every inquiry; there was no sign of her in Cascade City, and no news. Even the three guardians had moved their tents elsewhere, and left no trace behind, so he was driven to wandering vainly from one place to another, seeking for one tiny atom in the vast and countless masses of humanity which surged around.



"My continued thoughts of her have unhinged my mind."

A slight clew had taken him to England, when, according to his old promise, he went straight down to Lord Lasnorth's place in Somersetshire; but when he arrived there the grandeur of the old castle seemed to awaken memories which had slumbered for fifteen years, and rob him of the power of speech.

It was not until Devon broke the news of his approaching marriage that he seemed to throw off his mood of gloomy retrospection.

"I congratulate you with all my heart," he said gladly, "and I sincerely hope she is worthy of her good fortune."

Lord Lasnorth drew himself up to his full height and laughed. He was a perfect type of English manhood, and Charles caught his thoughts wandering back to his sorry past as he looked at him. God help those people who realize in others what they might once have been themselves.

"Worthy?" repeated the younger man, with a huge disdain. "Ah, but it is the other way up! It is I who am not worthy of her. I have loved her ever since I first met her three years ago, and recognized her pure heart, and the beauty of her whole nature. But she was very young, then, and her people would not hear of my speaking until last Christmas."

"What is her name?" asked Charles, with an amused smile over his enthusiasm.

"Hope Charteris," replied Devon. "She is the adopted child of very rich people, whose property adjoins mine. So I have had every opportunity of knowing her thoroughly. You will see her tonight, for she is coming over with Mr. and Mrs. Charteris and the rest of their party to dine. There will be a heap of other people besides, and I dare say the evening will end up in dancing. You will stay here until after the wedding, of course. It is only five days off now."

Charles shook his head, and looked away to the great stained-glass window at the end of the hall, where the Lasnorth arms showed faintly against the darkening sky of the winter afternoon.

"I'm very sorry," he said, "but it is impossible. I am over in England on business, and my time is limited."

Devon looked disappointed.

"Is it connected with the silver mine?" he asked. "Surely that could wait a week?"

Charles shook his head again.

"No; it is entirely personal business—business on which the weal and welfare of my life depends."

The younger man removed his eyes from the boarhounds at his feet to his friend's face.

"Is it about your health?" he asked diffidently.

Charles' face worked.

"No," he said, with a laugh more tearful than any tears, "not about my health. Nothing can alter that, unfortunately. It is only a matter of time now. But there is something I want to do first—some reparation I want to make for a past wrong, so that when the call comes I may depart in peace."

"I always knew there was some trouble in your past," went on the other sympathetically. "Your face shows it, and your manner of speech often betrays it. I suppose, like many other, the old, old story is at the root of it."

Charles put his hand across his eyes.

"Yes," he replied bitterly—"the old, old story of a man's sin and a man's bitter repentance. I sinned against a young white soul. I taught her to like me. I made her love me, and all the time I was a married man, and my wife shut up in an asylum, but a two days' journey beyond. And I would have ruined that girl's life had not a Higher hand interfered and saved her. I would have taken her away and gone through the form of marriage to satisfy her scruples if the Fate which rules everything for the best had not stopped my crime at the eleventh hour."

He paused for a short space to get his breath and give way to a hollow cough, which echoed through the great hall, and then he began again. It seemed almost as if the grand old castle, with its ancient memories and its lord and owner standing on its hearth in kindly sympathy, had opened up the hardness and constraint of years. For one brief moment Charles cast aside the garment of reserve which had earned him his sobriquet in the days gone by.

"I realized my mistake," he said hoarsely, "when we were followed and taken back, but I had no time to tell her so. We were parted there and then, and have never met again. So now I am roaming the world in search of her, that she may give me her forgiveness. I may have a chance of making reparation, for my wife is dead now, and at least I could leave her my name and money. She had neither of her own, poor child! for she was a foundling."

Lord Lasnorth left the fireplace, and, crossing the room, laid a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Do not talk of dying yet," he said, "for we are living in enlightened days; and science can do much for us. Please God you may regain not only your health, but your happiness, too."

"I wish I could dare to think so," he said. "Perhaps if I got the latter the former might follow its train. It is as much remorse which is draining my life's blood as anything else."

He moved away as he spoke and threw open the great front entrance door as if in search of air, and for a moment he stood there looking out on the wide stretch of park which sloped down to the lake, and the gleam of the marbled terraces as they spread away from the west wing showing the right.

Was it really possible, he wondered, that the Heaven-sent suggestion Lord Lasnorth had just made might come to pass? Was it really within the bounds of likelihood that there were still years of happiness in the future with him? He pictured himself in the future with Snowflake by his side, wandering round the lands of sunshine in the winter and living in the Old Country during the summer months, and as he did so his eyes seemed to take a brighter light, and his face to glow with fresher life and effort.

Lord Lasnorth joined him by the open door after a few minutes.

"You are looking at the view from the loveliest point," he said, "and yet"—with a short laugh—" it is a spot which I try to avoid, for it is connected with the Lasnorth legend. You must let me tell you some other time, for we must go and dress now. In half an hour the people will be here."

Charles took a fleeting glance at the west turret. It lay in utter darkness, like an evil omen standing against a fair background, and then, with a little shiver, he turned away and strode up the staircase to his own room.

He was the first to reach the drawing-room, and when Lord Lasnorth came in he uttered a slight exclamation of surprise.

"How did you find your way here?" he asked. "I was only thinking after I went upstairs that I had not shown you the whereabouts of the room."

Charles laughed a little awkwardly.

"The door was open," he said, "and the lights attracted me, so it was not very difficult."

The younger man took a searching glance around. "I wanted to have it newly done up," he remarked, "but Hope would not let me. She said she liked it much better in the old and mellow state."

Charles looked at the stiff brocade chairs and sofa, which, in spite of their somewhat faded appearance, looked thoroughly in keeping with the furniture and the many old minatures and priceless china decorating the walls and cabinets.

"I think she is quite right," he replied; "new silks and satins would look out of place in this seventeenth century room."

"I do hope you will like her," went on his host smilingly. "I have put you next her at dinner, so that you should have every chance of talking to her properly. I am quite sure that in all your wanderings you have never come across a lovelier face."

Charles had no time to reply, for at that moment the first arrivals were announced, and after that the other guests followed quickly in their wake. He found himself introduced first to one person and then another, and then he subsided on to a sofa beside a stout lady who seemed to know the names and histories of every one present and was delighted at the chance of imparting her information to a stranger.

"It will be so nice to have a hostess here," she remarked placidly, "for the castle has been without a lady ever since the late Lord Lasnorth lost his wife, twenty-six years ago. And Hope Charteris is such a charming girl, too, absolutely natural and unaffected. Here she comes, I expect, for I heard Mr. and Mrs. Charteris announced a second ago."

Charles looked at the door. A lady and gentleman were on the point of entering, both past middle age and with a kindly expression on their faces, which was attractive at first sight, but who was the lovely girl following close behind with eyes blue as a summer sea, and hair which turned to gold in the lamplight.

He gripped hold of the arm of the sofa. Surely that vision of beauty had been conjured up by his own thoughts? Surely it was nothing more than a mental impression materialized—the impression which had been imprinted on the surface of his mind ever since he had left Cascade City years ago?

He passed his hands across his eyes and looked again, but the vision did not fade. On the contrary, it seemed to gain in strength and power as he gazed on it, and to fill his heart with a bitter-sweet pain such as he had never felt before.

This time he told himself he was mad instead of dreaming.

"My continued thoughts of her have unhinged my mind," he said, with a vain attempt at self-control. "I will go closer, and prove myself the dreamer I am."

He half rose from his seat and then sat down again, for fresh arrivals had followed the girl into the room—three tall men with faces as well-known as the one who had preceded them, and the sight of which seemed to dumb his faculties and his power of movement.

The lady on the sofa spoke to him, but he did not answer, for Secret Charles had forgotten the grand old castle and the festivity in prospect, and had gone back to the years in the past. And as he sat there and looked at Snowflake and her guardians following close behind her, he realized the truth of things with a pain which rent him body and soul, and dried up the last of the life-springs flowing through his veins.

Hope had come into the room for the Lord of Lasnorth, but at the same moment it had died and withered in his guest's starved heart.

(Continued next week.)

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Most people who are stuck up are nothing but sticks.

One way to relieve the mind from worry is to go crazy.

Orchard didn't kill one a day. Some days he needed rest.

An Indian scalps his enemy; a white man skins his friend.

A man is apt to be suspicious if his wife isn't jealous of him.

A little learning is almost as dangerous as a little widow.

The average man's politics was an inheritance from his father.

It takes as little to make some men laugh as it does to worry others.

A fool can answer questions that a wise man would be ashamed to ask.

What the jury would like to know is how much of it was news to Haywood.

The early bird catches the worm—if the early fisherman doesn't beat him to it.

A woman ought to be ashamed to brag of her husband's ability to sew on buttons.

Boston has a creepy feeling on remembering that the Secretary of the Navy is a Pacific Coast man.

Kaiser Wilhelm may speak as sharply of the Japanese as he pleases. He has no Japanese problem at his door.

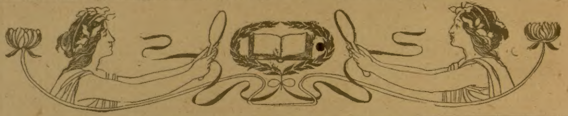
A man and his wife are considered one, but there are apt to be frequent arguments due to an attempt to settle which is the one.

When we annex South America the people of that country will take to the Fourth of July quite naturally. It will seem so much like one of their revolutions.

Harry Orchard must be glad that he managed to sell his confession before the witnesses for the defense pointed out what appeared to them to be a few flaws in it.

An Ohio banker squealed when he lost $75,000 in a brace game in New York. That is not to be wondered at. Most people would have made a noise like a stuck-pig chorus on such an occasion. When Cassie Chadwick is locked up the Ohio banker has to tell the real reason when he turns up some morning with $75,000 less than the usual amount in his vaults.

Mark Twain is going to start a crusade for 2-cent postage between this country and England. Mark doubtless expects to correspond regularly with King Edward and he doesn't want to be bothered about sticking on extra postage. It must be annoying to receive letters from a King to whom expense is no object, but who is not thoughtful enough to inclose a stamp for a reply. If he does it often Mark will tell him about it.



THE SECRET MARRIAGE;

—Or—

THE FATE OF A BIGAMIST.

By CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD, author of "Magnolia Blossoms," "Red Roses and Red Love," "A Traitor to Love," etc.

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CHAPTER IX.

UNCONSCIOUS VICIOUSNESS.

While our Southern friends were so hopelessly entangled in what might just as well have been merely an unpleasant occasion, but which, through the unconscious selfishness of one, was fast becoming real tragedy, fate was busy with other lives, and on the day that Pansy confessed her love for Kenneth, and the one before Helen discovered the morning paper, in the corner of a waiting-room in one of the large department stores were two persons, both past thirty. There had been a time when at eighteen and nineteen, these two had wandered under a moon that was witching, with words of love trembling upon their lips. A few did fall from his, but she stopped him, for he was engaged to another who loved him desperately, or so she thought.

As she sat by him today, thinking of the man of the past, she could scarcely believe that the almost ascetic boy of nineteen, with broad brow, clear, innocent eyes and weak mouth, that trembled with longing for her and pleaded for her kisses, even as she strengthened his honor, could be her present companion.

"It cannot be," she whispered, feeling strangely moved.

It had been a very hard matter, and looking back she wondered at her girlish strength of character that had made her keep true to her own ideals, and him to her own standard.

"I wonder," she thought, "if we all live up to the good that commences with us. Can we expand it as we ought, or are we bound by our own helplessness or surrounding circumstances?"

Her companion was looking at her hungrily. He had loved only this one woman through eighteen years, and some of them miserable ones, failures from the beginning to the end. Although all those years had passed, she seemed to him the same, the one love of his life.

"But you know I loved you then, and I have never stopped loving you," the man said firmly. The graceful figure was well held, the white hand, guiltless of any traces of work, unconsciously extended.

She looked at him, her delicate face made more beautiful by the trouble of years, calm, yet a little wistful.

"I've kept on loving you, Grace, no matter what has happened, though I have only seen you four times during all those years."

"I know," she said slowly, her mind going back to the other three. The first time had been when passing through her town, he had called with his wife, and she had been pained to notice the heavy wrinkle between his brows, and the sharp inflection in his voice. Any one could read the unhappiness that existed between the two, and still in the bloom and romance of her youth, fully recovered from her passing fancy for this man, she wondered if she had ruined two lives by insisting upon the marriage which had taken place two years before.

Eight years passed, and he came again to her own home, to see her adored by a husband, and happy with her two little ones, and she pitied, and in the few moments she had spoken with him she tried to turn his mind from his strange, wild ideas. When she had first known him, he had been studying for the ministry; now he raved against all established religion, yet was prosperous. After he had gone, her husband had said gently:

"I would have hardly chosen that man for a girlish companion of yours," and she herself almost wished that they had never known each other, and what he had said then rang in her ears:

"I feel like blowing out my brains, Grace, when I see what a woman can make out of a man. Never attempt to thwart fate; its punishment is more than the best can stand."

In the years which followed, great trouble came to her, for first her husband, then her two children were taken from her, and at last her money went also, and at thirty she was forced to earn her own living, and it was in a business way she met him for the third time.

His face was stern, cold and hard. The eyes once so innocent were merciless, for his business then was the robbing of the poor, in one of the famous get-rich-quick concerns, out of which he later managed to slip, just in time, with a fortune and none of the punishment. It had nearly broken his heart to see the woman he had worshiped for so many years, working, and for so little. He had begged her to accept a loan and offered it as he would have done to her husband. He implored her to come into his office as his employe, but she could only give him a negative reply because of her thorough appreciation of his love. Try as he might, that love betrayed itself in almost every word or gesture, although he thought he had better control over himself.

"At least come into my office, Grace," he pleaded. "I employ half a dozen, and at double the amount you are receiving," but she gently shook her head.

"You are not afraid of me? You know you are as sacred as my memory of your innocent girlhood, the dearest and purest influence that ever came into my life."

The woman, still beautiful, although all the girlish freshness and joyousness was buried in the graves of her husband and children, smilingly shook her head again.

"No, Rob," she replied, "I am not afraid of you, because I know myself; but even so, I know that you would not willingly harm me in any way, and I will not your wife."

An angry expression passed over his face and he muttered an oath that made her draw back:

"Forgive me," he said contritely, "but I cannot think of her except in that way. How could you harm her?"

"She knows of your love, and perhaps that has blighted her life."

"Of course she knows of it," he muttered, remembering telling her before the honeymoon was over that she owed her husband to the generosity of another woman, and he had not done it cruelly, but simply to let his wife know that another might have been his.

With that they had parted, and until he had seen her entering this department store, he had not laid his eyes upon her sweet face, which had always been an inspiration to him.

"Grace!" he had cried.

"Rob!" she had returned, for during all these years she could not forget that it was her influence which had forced the unhappy marriage.

"Come to lunch," he pleaded.

She shook her head again. It seemed to him that all his life he was constantly asking her to do something to make her shake her head.

"I must talk with you," came next, almost savagely.

"Then come up here in the waiting-room," she suggested, leading the way, and not looking fully at him until they were seated, and she had thrown back her coat and furs and drawn her long gloves from the exquisite hands he had always admired.

And then he whispered a bit of news, which gave him not only comfort, but almost happiness, and realizing what his married life had been, Grace did not blame him:

"Grace, she's dead, has been for six months. I've been hunting you ever since," and then he had proclaimed his love.

She tried to interrupt, but he kept on, and she had time, as he talked, to look at him, the developed man from the boy of nineteen.

Tall, exceedingly graceful, with an air of mingling with people of the world; upon his face, in spite of his emotion, a mask which told nothing; lines upon his face which denoted magnificent control, all this so bad, when taken into conjunction with what else she saw, made her shiver. A man who had such power of control over the muscles of his face, who could draw his mouth into a tense, straight line, ought to have learned what feature betrayed him, his eyes.

"I love you, Grace, and this time you are going to be my wife," he said, and these words were spoken with fierce determination.

Again came that little shake of the head which had controlled him for so many years, but he threw out his hands, white as hers, and said desperately, yet in a very low tone:

"Do you think I am going to [illegible]ait eighteen years for you and now lose you?"

Grace looked at the face, then said slowly:

"How have you waited [illegible] me, Rob? You know that I could not love a bad man, and do you offer me a good one?"

"I offer you a life out of which you can make anything you wish. Here is a human soul lying bare before you, for you to take back, purify and make fit to mingle with your own, or cast aside into the mire of my own making."

"Bob," she said in so low a tone that he could barely hear her, "could I do such a thing?"

"Do it? Of course you could, and I will sell my business and we'll go abroad, and our lives will be so happy. I think I could make you happy, my little girl, I think I could," and he bent a little nearer. From his breath came the smell of liquor, and she remembered what she had known from observation of men who were used to drinking mixed drinks at his age.

"You drink too heavily," she whispered, her eyes shadowing.

"I won't if you take me."

"Very heavily?"

"Yes, more than I ever thought possible, and I can stand my share, but marry me, love, and I'll drop everything and show you what life is."

Unconsciously he was growing confident; as he did so his language grew coarser, and the strange appearance of his eyes deepened. The once clear, honest eyes had deep pouches under them, heavily veined, and not once had they met her blue ones. As she examined them, a tiny sprite like a black devil seemed to dance in them, and again and again he gave her a sickening wink, as though there lay between them some bestial secret. It was this which frightened her. All these years, although all love had vanished, there had lingered the faint aroma of a tender affection, and now that she had met him, free, and needing her so much, she was tempted, as every good woman is when offered a chance to reform a man for whom at any time she has felt a fondness.

Grace was sensible, and as she realized—since this self-confidence brought out alarmingly new traits, of which he was only conscious as they affected her—how little she knew, after all her work, of men as a whole, and especially of a dissolute one, she hesitated.

Although he did love her, the man's finer feelings were blunted by his various affairs; he utterly misunderstood and exulted, feeling sure of winning her at last. Leaning forward, he whispered:

"My darling, you're mine, and I knew I'd win. There doesn't live a woman you know who can't be won. I've spent eighteen years in wooing you, my dainty little creature. You all have your prices, and yours is a wedding ring. Bless her! It won't be the only one I'll put on those fingers!"

Grace had shrunk back, her heart beating rapidly, thoroughly frightened.

"I'll buy you the finest clothes the shops have; no other women you know will have any better diamonds than the kind I'm going to buy you. If you don't want to bother with housekeeping, we can have some rooms that will put any others 'on the bum,' and you'll have money enough to give any other of the girls the double cross. Come, honey, when shall I get the license?"

Grace rose slowly, her head whirling, and yet her heart thankful to think that this man had now killed forever any sentimental feeling she had treasured, and shown her that this was not a man in whom she could put the least trust, for he was lost to self-respect and to respect of her.

"What is your business?" she asked slowly, as she drew on her gloves.

"That isn't answering my question, honey, but I'll tell you. I own one of those dance halls, with a saloon attached, and I have such a pull that I run with open doors, regardless of the lid."

"You are at your place of business a good portion of the time, I take it," she rejoined.

"Jealous, are you?" he laughed, as though to wring her very being.

Then her womanhood protected her, forced her to defend herself, although she tear out his heart. Drawing her slender figure to its full height, she said with a sternness he had never heard before:

"And you dare to soil my soul by approaching me, your hands reeking with infamy, your pockets bulging with money torn from the encouragement of the worst vices! You have changed! No, no, and forever no! And to make your infamy even worse you offer me the same advantages you would one of the poor creatures you and others like you have ruined. I have known you eighteen years, but I wish that you had died right there, rather than that you had lived to see nothing wrong in such words, or that you could dishonor me to the extent of thinking it possible that I would ask you the question I did with any such idea. I asked you if you were not at your place of business a good deal of the time, because I saw how unconsciously the talk and manners of such a class had been imbibed by you. I did not spoil your life, thank Heaven! The wickedness was within, and each change in circumstances brought out something more. Your wife could not save you, neither can I," and as he stood dazed, Grace vanished, leaving him so heavy a heart that he drank himself into unconsciousness for the first time in his life, and she went back to her room to cry until a new day broke, and she realized that from now on she would have a hard battle to fight, for what she thought was dead forever had sprung into a new life. Like so many women, she loved deepest when the object was least worthy, and longed to surround him with her own purity. Still, knowing the world, she knew that she must thus love hopelessly, for nothing but a miracle could rescue him from his unconscious viciousness, and she was not able to work it. Above her, as she wept, Helen was sleeping, dreaming of the man she adored, and in whom then she could see no flaw.

CHAPTER X.

MORE ERRORS.

If the distance seemed long to Calhoun Fairley as he hurried South to his father's deathbed, it was doubly so as he seemed to crawl back North to join his wife, whom, no matter what his faults might be, he adored, and for whom his heart longed. New York reached, he fumed about, filling in the time sending telegrams, all of which the clerk laid aside, deciding not to give them to Helen while her heart was so bruised. Better a thousand times that he had not taken matters into his own hands, but how could he know that it was a husband sending messages to his wife, and not a betrayer seeking to further wrong the girl? And thus George Goodrich made his error.

When Calhoun finally reached the little depot of Highland Springs, he entered the florist's establishment, ordered a great box of the red roses he felt were so appropriate for his bride, then after having his clothes brushed, his face shaved and all signs of travel removed from his person, he took a cab to the hotel, intending to bear away his darling in that very vehicle, which was much more comfortable than the station carriages.

"Wait," he said to the driver, and went into the hotel smiling, his heart beating rapidly, and yet looking confident and happy.

Going up to the clerk, he said carelessly, holding out his card:

"Kindly send that up to Miss Croton's room, and ask her if she will see me in the ladies' parlor."

George Goodrich looked in astonishment at the young man who could return and boldly ask to see his victim.

Flushing a deep red, he said slowly:

"Miss Croton is not here."

"What?" Calhoun asked slowly.

"She left."

"And her address?"

"She left none."

"I sent her several telegrams. Did she receive them?"

"She left before their arrival."

"I see. Well, I'll take them," and he held out his hand.

"I don't know about that. They were addressed to her. Can you repeat their contents?"

Calhoun flushed a little, but as he was not seriously uneasy, for they had planned for just such a flitting, and knowing that he had written to his own wife, he said slowly:

"Why, I don't know; I suppose so."

"Welch," called the clerk to the telegraph operator, "come here and let Mr. Fairley outline the telegrams he says he has written, and see if they are O. K."

Being so occupied with his own affairs, Calhoun failed to see the biting sarcasm and insolence in the clerk's voice, and drawing a block of paper toward him, he began, saying to the operator:

"I may get a word or so wrong, you can understand that?"

"Sure," Welch responded, dashing back as he heard his call.

The first one Calhoun wrote read thus:

"New York at last. The Springs as fast as train will bring me. Dear love."

The next one was:

"Precious One: Don't worry. Soon be with you, then explanations will follow."

The third was even more incriminating:

"Your sacrifice magnificent. I'll make up fully. Don't let anything that comes under your notice worry you. Until we meet."

It annoyed Calhoun to write these, but he wanted to take the others with him to show Helen. All his references to worry of course spelled "gossip among the hotel people and Mrs. Bly." The operator bent his head, glanced at the words, then said crisply:

"He sent them, Mr. Goodrich."

The clerk pushed the three yellow envelopes over the counter, then turned away. Calhoun took up the slip of paper, thrust it into his pocket, and turned to leave. All his thoughts were bent upon reaching New York as soon as possible.

"A moment, Mr. Fairley," the clerk said coldly. "Some roses arrived for Miss Croton."

Calhoun laughed carelessly. "Keep them. I don't want them," and passed out of the hotel, disappointed but not at all uneasy.

The clerk looked at the box of flowers, then gave it a kick which split the box, and sent the great, glowing roses all over the floor.

"Aw, don't!" cried the operator. "They haven't hurt you."

The reply was a short one of rage, and Welch, remembering a little girl whom he liked pretty well, but was not able to send much to, carefully gathered up the beautiful blooms, laid them in the box, and took to her house during his noon hour.

"I say, Welch," the clerk said during the afternoon, "did those telegrams say anything about a mistake in names or anything like that?"

"No, just for her to keep from worrying, that he would make things right, and one of them ran way over."

George Goodrich as he heard these words felt that he had acted very wisely in giving no information, though his heart bled when he reached home and saw the sweet, pale face and reddened eyes, and knew that here was one whose life was blasted, and by one who could speak of her so smilingly. Suddenly his face was aflame with what he naturally felt just indignation. The man must be on his bridal trip, stopping off to see the girl he—then he stopped. Not even in his thoughts would he let the dreadful thing dwell.

Poor Calhoun, utterly unaware of the clerk's enmity, took the next train back, deciding not to send any more telegrams. "It was impudent in that fellow asking me to reproduce them, when I had been at the hotel," he thought at last, and with that thought came another, and he leaned back against his seat, fairly cursing himself.

"Why, I can put an end to Pansy's misery—could then. I'm not married to her, no matter if a ceremony was read over us. Why the devil didn't I think to speak out? It's a shame. I'll telegraph," and he fumbled in his pocket for a bit of paper, then he paused to think.

"They can't understand, no matter how long I make it. Helen and I can get there as soon as a message could be carried over, and we want to keep things quiet. This is a business I don't like. Unconsciously, I'm a bigamist, and it's an ugly word. Poor little Pansy! Think of the complication if she had loved me. Wasn't I a jackass to think she did? Yet, if I hadn't met my Helen, I probably would have imagined myself in love with her," remembering how ardently he had kissed her good-by, and then laughing as he also remembered how little effect it had upon her.

"Bless old Ken, he deserves even her, our little flower girl. No one is too good for him, not even my Helen. She is too much above any mere man to meet her equal, but God helping me, I'll do my best to make her dear life worth living. Thought she and I would take Pansy with us?" then he laughed out loud, much to the astonishment of several people, especially a tall man, who looked as though some devil was within.

Later the two men sat in the smoking car, and Calhoun, happy and excited, introduced himself. The other man handed him his card, which read:

"Robert Erskine."

"Have something?" the latter asked.

"No, thanks, I'm not much of a drinking man, and specially on a day like this."

The other man looked at him for a moment, then said slowly:

"You're right, for you look as though you were on the verge of a severe illness. Been over-drinking?"

Calhoun looked a little annoyed, the intimacy of the question offended his pride, then he forgot it in his thought of Helen.

"Of course not. I don't drink, other than a glass of wine now and then."

"What's exciting you so? Better pull yourself up," Mr. Erskine said gravely. "I have seen a good many men like you. You see we can do just so much and no more."

"I'll tell you," Calhoun said with a sharp, nervous laugh. "I'm going back to my wife."

"Been separated?"

"Yes, and for an age. I had expected to find her back there, but she has gone to New York." How good it seemed to say "my wife." Come to think of it, this was the first time he had called Helen that to any one other than her own dear self.

The man looked a little interested, and he asked with a bitterness in his voice, that took from it any unpleasant familiarity:

"Then men sometimes win the women they love?"

"Of course they do, but few such as I. Indeed, I worship her so I cannot talk to you about her."

"You're right, but I envy you."

"Why?"

"Because you are going to your wife. I loved a woman eighteen years and cannot win her."

Calhoun put out his hand to the quiet, handsome man, whose heavy lids scarcely ever lifted.

The two shook hands warmly, and Calhoun said that he was going to take his wife away from New York that very day, or he would be delighted to have him meet her.

Erskine shook his head. "Much obliged, but I would not intrude. May I offer a little advice. You are young as a husband and in life, my boy. Don't introduce any one to your wife until you are sure of who they are. I am not one to meet a lady."

Before Calhoun could think of anything to say, the man continued:

"I don't think I would try any more traveling for a few days. You are liable to break down, I say."

"I can't do that, you know, for I'll have her. I'm excited, thinking of meeting her again. I've been away but a short time, after all, but then we had been married but a short time, and I have not heard from her in the interval and she left no message for me, although I know where she is," and Calhoun lit another cigar. He was smoking heavily.

The other man looked out of the window. "Poor lad," he thought. "Is there only one really good woman in the world?" His experiences had made him put the worst construction upon matters of this nature, and after they had parted at the depot, he entered a cab, and began to follow Calhoun. "He'll go all to pieces," he thought to himself. "For, unless I am very much mistaken, there'll be no wife at the end of this journey."

This time Calhoun did not stop for any preliminaries, but drove directly in the electric cab he had seized upon with the feverishness which characterized all his actions just now, to the address Helen had given him.

When he arrived, he jumped out, not noticing a passing cab, and rushing up to the door, pressed the bell with wild energy. Ten minutes later he staggered out, with a paper clenched in his hands. He had not retained his cab, and he looked about for another, seeing everything through a dull red haze. He staggered like a drunken man, and readily stumbled into a cab which drew up to the curb, so overcome that he did not notice it was not empty.

With his great strength, Robert Erskine pulled him inside, and told the man to get all out of the cab he could, then made his guest as comfortable as possible. As he relaxed a little, the paper fell from his hand, and Erskine without any compunction read the few lines:

"Good-by forever. I will have passed from your life when you read this, never to return. Do not try to find me, for I will kill myself if discovered."

"All alike but one," the larger man said sneeringly. "Well, I'll look after this bit of driftwood, flung upon the shore of despair by the relentless waves of women's wickedness."

It was well he did make this decision, for before he could get his charge to a hotel, Calhoun was raving in the throes of brain fever.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FLOWERS.

"But Pansy," came in a man's voice.

"Ken," pleadingly, in a woman's voice.

"Pansy, darling, we are engaged. You admit that."

"I know, Ken, but as long as any legal tie binds me, I don't think——"

"What, sweetheart?"

"That you ought to kiss me."

"Don't you want me to?"

"Oh, Ken!"

"Yes, my little girl. There, let me hold your hand, and I'll do just as you want me. Listen. This morning I wrote to a dozen legal authorities, asking them to look into the matter for us. If that old dummy of a colonel had not registered it and made it public property, why, I think we could get it set aside."

"Then you believe that it is legal?"

"No," and the lips that asked the question were covered by warm, eager ones, and she did not repulse him. Everything was so twisted up she scarcely knew what to do.

"No, not much," when he regained his breath, "but the conditions are so peculiar," and he wrinkled his brows.

"Don't mention one of them," she cried, putting two dainty little hands over his mouth. "I have heard so much of them that I seem to hate every one."

"Not me, dear?" and the dark eyes glowed into the blue ones.

Like a little child worn out with her struggles, Pansy laid her golden head on his shoulder, saying softly:

"Don't be so silly, Ken," and naturally she was kissed again.

Kenneth Rolf, one of the most honorable men, felt himself almost losing his mind over the tangle. If Pansy had loved Calhoun, or he her, he would not have thought of even speaking a word of love to the girl he adored, but as things were, Calhoun had frankly admitted that his love was given to some one else. He had spoken as though his love were returned, so that made another party suffer. This last gave him a new idea.

"Pansy, sweet."

"What, Ken?" feeling that she ought to sit upright and not let him stroke her hair so delicately and tenderly.

"I am sure Calhoun loves some one else, and she him."

"He said he did."

"When he rejoins her, do you think he will hold back and merely shake her hand," kissing Pansy's pink-palmed one, "because a stupid old silly made a mistake, way down here?"

"No, I don't believe he will," she replied, her eyes sparkling.

"Neither do I, and I don't intend to be the least behind him in ardor. Let me kiss you, darling, for tomorrow I must go down county and be away from you during the holding of court. Let me make love to you as I used to before this intangible cloud arose between us. Oh, Pansy, don't be cruel to me, for I love you so, and you me, and if we have to run away together, I will never let Calhoun take you away from me," and springing to his feet, the fiery young man paced back and forth.

Pansy smiled up at him, and when he stopped and looked down at her, she asked with a merry laugh:

"And do you think you are the only one to have a say in this matter, Ken, dear? You know that he doesn't want me, nor I him. Now sit down here and I'll tell you the kind of a wife Cal needs," and reaching up her hand, she caught his, and he sat down beside her, the two making one of the most delightful pictures, in the old white rose garden. Not out of disrespect to her guardian, but in compliance with his strongly expressed wishes, Pansy wore her usual white, and looked a white rose in it. Her fair, blonde beauty was in striking contrast to young Rolf's dark eyes, black hair and clear olive complexion, and both were so young and ought to have been perfectly happy, but were overshadowed by this strange marriage ceremony.

Yet the afternoon was not a miserable one, after all, for Kenneth calmed himself, and sitting by the dear, golden-haired girl, gathered flowers for her, telling her tender little stories about them, and she, listening, almost forgot their great trouble.

Reaching out, he gathered a magnificent rose, dark and velvety, and as he laid it in her lap, he whispered:

"See, dear, love's rose, not our love as yet," placing a bright, spicy pink beside it, "but the love perfected. It is the love we will have for each other after we have drunk of the waters of life and death, and learned through trouble what we are to each other. Once, in bygone ages, that rose was as white as this," a white one lay beside the other two, "but one day a humming bird whirled by, and seeing the rose languishing on its bush, asked in a sweet little voice:

" 'What's the matter, Miss Rose? While beautiful, you are so pale.

" 'I seem to need something more in my life. I am unhappy,' the white rose replied.

" 'Never fear,' whirled back the humming bird, 'your time will come, and then looking back on these days you will wish that you had never first blushed red at love, then given up your life blood for it.' The humming bird left her, and in its place came love. The beautiful rose blushing, turned slowly from pure white to pink, then crimson, and when sorrow came, her lovely petals reddened to this shade here," laying a hand upon the deep red rose, "and it happened that the humming bird came by and recognized the rose. 'It has come to you, as to others. Now confess, don't you wish you were here as you were when I first came by, a white rose?' "

The deep voice of the man ceased, and he looked into the face of the silent girl.

"The answer, Ken?" she whispered.

"Only you can give it," was his return.

She hesitated a moment, then laying her hand on his replied steadily:

"No, never. I would not go back one step in our beautiful love," and who can blame him if he kissed her for that?

Her next question was a roguish one. Looking up from under her long eyelashes, she asked:

"Then I am a deep red rose to you now?"

With a smile the young man arose, and leaving her for a moment, returned, his hands full of her namesake flowers, which he showered upon her.

"These, my darling, are what you are to me, my Heartsease. Just remember that."

She caught the beautiful pansies up in her hands, and buried her face in them, kissing the quaint little faces he had taught her to see in them.

"Ken," she cried, "I wonder if there was ever any one who could say such beautiful things. All my life long you have taught me to see the lovely side of nature. Where others see a tree, you can point out a thousand little fancies. I love flowers, but your flowers are different from any others. Ah, Ken, darling, what would life be to me without you?"

For a moment she had forgotten the terrible ceremony, and she stretched out her hands, the pansies tumbling about them, her eyes dewy with unshed tears.

Tenderly he took the little hands, kissed them with the chivalry of old, then said gently, but with repressed feeling in his voice:

"Darling, I must go now. My work lies before me, but as soon as I come back I will see you. In the meanwhile I am going to bend every energy to break this frightful bond."

"Oh, Ken, don't leave me!" Pansy cried, clinging to him.

"Pansy," he said, his eyes glowing, "would you be willing to ask for a divorce?"

She shrank back, her face paling. The word was filled with terrible meaning for her. Slowly she shook her head.

"I couldn't, Ken. Only wicked women are divorced," and she spoke as she had been taught.

"I understand, dear, how you feel," returned the young lawyer. "I tell you, dear, as a last resort, we will have to have the ceremony annulled."

"What's that?" Pansy asked.

"To have it set aside. You see it was all a terrible mistake, and I think the courts will declare that there was no marriage."

"Then we will be free?"

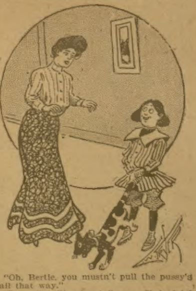
"Yes, precious."

Pansy looked at the old brick house, ivy-covered; the swaying trees crowding close to it, and shuddered. Suddenly the only home she had ever known seemed hateful, and she longed to get away.

"Ken, have that done, won't you?" and he, with the tenderness of his great love shining in his eyes, kissed her again, as he whispered:

"Just as soon as it can be done," then left her, sitting pale and miserably unhappy on the rustic bench, surrounded with the flowers with which he had amused her.

Next week's Ledger will contain another installment of this highly interesting story. We advise you to read it to the end. Do you take the Ledger regularly? You ought to do so, as it is acknowledged to be one of the most entertaining papers printed in America. For a year's subscription we send fifty-two copies of the Ledger and six fine patterns free or one of our King Cameras. Note our premium advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.



"Oh, Bertie, you mustn't pull the pussy's tail that way."

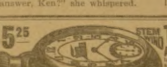
"I aren't pulling her tail, ma. She's doin' it herself. I'm only just simply holdin' on."

Died in Vain.

It was at a meeting of war veterans gathered together to orate on the unspeakable apathy of the Government in the matter of their pensions, that an Irishman started up and exclaimed:

"Be jabers, comrades, is it possible that we died in vain?"

There is a chance for some genius to acquire everlasting fame by inventing a device that will enable a man to determine who his friends really are.



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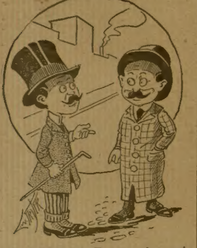


Mr. Caller Downe—Your new shoes make a lot of noise. You know they say "that squeaky boots are never paid for."

Mr. I. M. P. Cunius—All bosh. If there was anything in that, why don't my trousers and my coat and vest squeak, too?

Tries it on Grandma.

Grandma was spending the holidays with her only grandchild, little Willie, aged 5. The other day he came into the house on the run "O, grandma, I've got a piece of candy for you," he said, extending a grimy paw.

Fearing refusal would hurt the lad's feelings, grandma accepted the candy. Willie watched her closely until he was satisfied that the candy was gone.

"Say, grandma, are you sure you liked that lozenger?" he queried.

"O, yes," said grandma. "But what's funny about it, Willie?" she asked, mildly curious.

"Well, you know, I gave the lozenger to Fido to see what he would do with it, and, grandma, he didn't like it at all, for he wouldn't eat it and he spitted it out twice."

A New Breed.

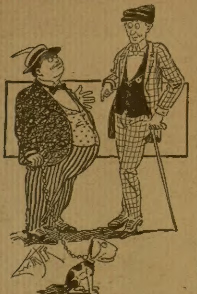
Dog-fancier—Yes, madame, I have all kinds of dogs here. Is there any particular breed you wish?

Old Lady (who reads the papers)—Oh, anything that's fashionable. Lemme see an ocean greyhound.

Where Safety Lay.

Mayde—Do you ever tell your wife a fairy tale?

Major—Never. I always deny that I know any fairy.



"What do you call your little dog?"

"I used to call him William until he had fits, and now I call him Fitzwilliam."

A New Remedy for Baldness.

Johnny—Why are you putting camphor on those furs?

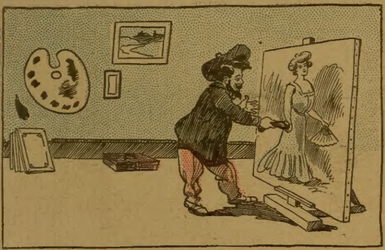
Mother—To keep the moths out of them.

Johnny—What will the moths do if they get into the furs?

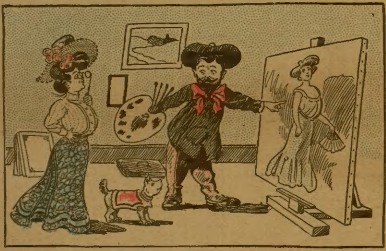
Mother—Eat the hair off.

Johnny—Well, why don't you put camphor on pa's head to keep the moths off of it?

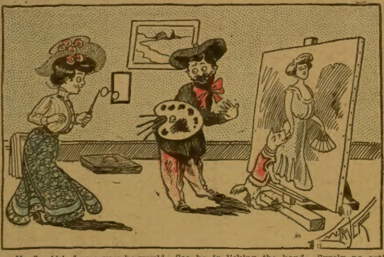
PORTRAITURE AS A FINE ART.



No. 1.—Artist Kid—I s'pose some artists would think it queer to put the finishing touches on a portrait with a raw mutton chop. But I know the fine points of this business, all right.



No. 2.—Yes, madam, the portrait is finished. Certainly, I understand that you are not to accept it unless your dog recognizes it. Let him speak at once.



No. 3.—Ah! I was sure he would. See, he is licking the hand. Surely no artist could expect a greater compliment than that. Where shall I send it, madam?

It is easier to write silly letters than it is not to mail them.

Those who win success by practice haven't time to preach.

A SMALL SECRET

Couldn't Understand the Taste of His Customers.

Two men were discussing the various food products now being supplied in such variety and abundance.

One, a grocer, said, "I frequently try a package or so of any certain article before offering it to my trade, and in that way sometimes form a different idea than my customers have.

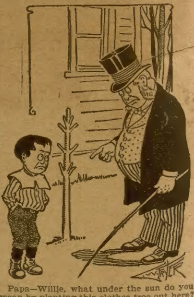
"For instance, I thought I would try some Postum Food Coffee, to see what reason there was for such a call for it. At breakfast I didn't like it and supper proved the same, so I naturally concluded that my taste was different from that of the customers who bought it right along.

"A day or two after I waited on a lady who was buying a 25c package and told her I couldn't understand how one could fancy the taste of Postum.

" 'I know just what is the matter,' she said, 'you put the coffee boiler on the stove for just fifteen minutes, and ten minutes of that time it simmered, and perhaps five minutes it boiled, now if you will have it left to boil full fifteen minutes after it commences to boil, you will find a delicious Java-like beverage, rich in food value of gluten and phosphates, so choice that you will never abandon it, particularly when you see the great gain in health.' Well, I took another trial and sure enough I joined the Postum army for good, and life seems worth living since I have gotten rid of my old time stomach and kidney troubles."

Postum is no sort of medicine, but pure liquid food, and this, together with a relief from coffee worked the change. "There's a Reason."

Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.



Papa—Willie, what under the sun do you mean by planting this clothes tree out here?

Willie—Why, papa, you see, I need a new suit of clothes, and I thought if I did that, perhaps they would grow on the clothes tree!

Warm Times Ahead.

Despite his rheumatism and lumbago the old farmer was in hot pursuit of the lads who had been pilfering his cherry trees.

"Keep on running, Billy!" panted the boy with the hat full of red cherries. "He's coming, and coming fast. I can hear him puffing and he sounds like a steam engine."

"Whew!" gasped the lad who was stumbling through the tall grass. "An' that ain't the worst of it. When he gets us he is liable to turn from a steam engine to a thrashing machine."

And soon the lusty yells that emanated from the old orchard told that the transformation had taken place.

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is wise to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She is the simplest and best of barometers. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a good business souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for only 10 cents. W. P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

Trolley on Cat's Back?

While visiting a friend, a neighbor came in with her two children, a girl of 3 and boy of 5. The little ones discovered a large Maltese cat on the rug, and sat down to play with it. Presently the little girl said: "Brudded, did oo know cats had ewecticity in them?" Her brother replied: "Yes, I knew that long ago; put your hands on their backs and you will feel the trolley."

AGENTS WANTED

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Wanted District Manager. Make $200 a Month

representing us in the sale of our goods, also to appoint and take charge of Sub-agents. A No. 1 proposition for energetic gentleman or lady. Finest goods, grand selection of free premiums. First-class concern. Biggest kind of an opportunity to get established in business. No money required. Liberal credit. Address for particulars

THE GREAT EASTERN COFFEE & TEA CO.,
301 S. 10th Street, St. Louis, Mo.

The Chauffeur's Hard Luck.

"Your honor," said the chauffeur, arrested for skidding along the spine of a pedestrian, "I cannot afford to pay a fine."

"I suppose, then, you intend to pay the man you injured?"

"Even that luxury is denied me," said the prisoner, "for the accident cost all I had."

"Machine much damaged?"

"No; but I had a bet that I could cross town at thirty miles an hour and not hit anybody."

An Easy Job.

Tired Tatters—Weary, if you wuz compelled to work, an' wuz given yore pick uv jobs, wot kind would you take?

Weary Walker—At the present writin' I dunno uv enny softer thing than bein' a understudy for a pug dorg.

JOLLITY

Just So.

Facto—In the ages past, how did people ever manage to live without telephones and the telegraph?

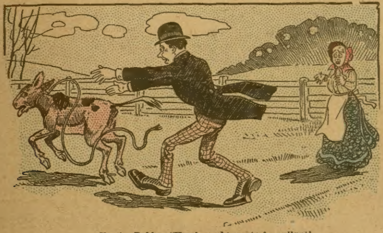
Philos—They didn't; they all died.

Unadulterated Brand.

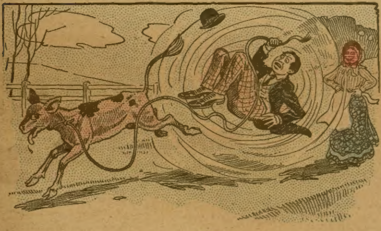
Little Willie—What is joy, pa?

Pa—Joy, my son, is the peculiar feeling experienced by the man who counts his money and finds more than he expected.

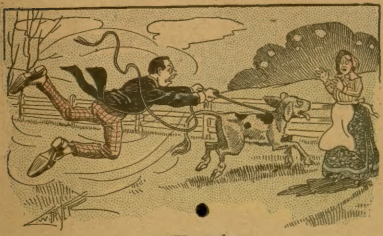
SEIZING AN OPPORTUNITY.



No. 1.—Bubbs—"Here's a chance to be gallant!



No. 2.—"Ouch!



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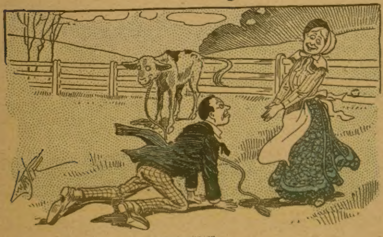
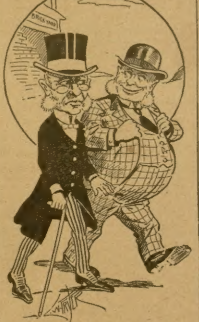


No. 4.—"At!"



The Professor—It is said that the ordinary brick absorbs nearly fifteen ounces of water.

The Joker—All the boys say Boozem is a brick, but I never heard of him absorbing water.

No Increase of Salary.

Mrs. Wickler—Dear me! how all the necessities of life have gone up.

Wickler—No; they haven't all gone up.

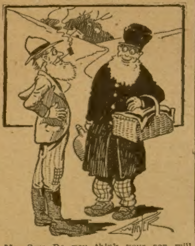
Mrs. Wickler—Well, I should like you to mention one thing that hasn't gone up.

Wickler—Certainly. My salary.

Patient Waiting No Loss.

Confiding Son—Mother, what's the best way to propose to a girl?

Mother—When the right girl comes along, my son, you won't need any advice.



Mr. Sow—Do you think your son will learn anything about how to make money at that college?

Mr. Reap—Well, he got five hundred out of me the first year.

Philosophical Jonah.

Jonah was making the best of his tight squeeze.

"What's the use of kicking?" he soliloquized. "This apartment is not a bit smaller than the city flat I used to occupy."

And then Jonah crossed his legs and began to whistle, "What's the Use to Blubber When There's Blubber All Around?"

Nothing Serious.

The guest in the hotel dining-room let out a large open-face sigh.

"Anything wrong, sir?" queried the waiter.

"Oh, no," replied the guest. "I was only wondering if I would live to be as old as this chicken."

AGENTS WANTED

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"OUR GEM" Sewing Machine $12.95
Business reorganized on improved plans.
EVERY CUSTOMER SHARES IN PROFITS.
Order from any catalogue on guarantee of satisfaction or money back. Get our catalogue and wholesale prices. Save money. SUGAR 4½c, Flour 2⅜c, Rice and Prunes 5c. Other goods in proportion. Agents wanted.
CASH BUYERS CO-OP. UNION, 300 Madison Street, CHICAGO

LEARN to make Mirrors and make big money at home. Partic. for stamp. MacMasters, D36, Peru, Ind

$150. A MONTH PROFIT E. D. ROBERTS, [illegible] earns selling Electric Combs, YOU CAN EARN IT Dr. C. L. HULL, 1481 Penn Ave., Pittsburg, Pa.

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY CO., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

SELL TOBACCO AND CIGARS. Locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Full time or side line. Steady work. Good pay. Promotion. Address MOROTOCK TOBACCO WORKS, Box T 12, DANVILLE, VA.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290—80 W. Adams St., Chicago.

"WONDER" STRAW HAT CLEANER
Makes an old hat look like new. Easily and quickly applied. Postpaid, 10 cents package. Agents wanted. C. M. BAILEY & Co., Dept. N, Dorchester Center, Mass.

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In every town to take orders for Custom-made Suits and Overcoats from $11.00 up, and Trousers from $3.50 up. Big commissions paid and large Sample Outfit in traveling case furnished free to those who can do business. You can make big money working for us. Write at once for Sample Outfit. The Warrington W. & W. Mills, Dept. 59, 173 Adams St., Chicago.

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Men who possess selling ability can get the most for it by representing us for the sale of our popular policies of accident and health insurance. Experience not essential. Exclusive territory, and active co-operation given to hustlers. Excellent openings and liberal terms for agents, collectors and district managers. Address, at once,
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AGENTS learn to fit glasses by sending for our Free Book on the eye; it will tell you all about it. A business that pays you from $75.00 to $150.00 per month without fail; the optical profession will do it for you. No field so pleasant, profitable or so little worked. No longer necessary to work for some one else at a meager salary. Every agent should have this VALUABLE BOOK. It costs you nothing and tells all about fitting glasses and where to get the best supplies at wholesale prices. Address JACKSONIAN OPTICAL COLLEGE, Dept. F, JACKSON, MICHIGAN

MAKE MONEY EASY
Agents wanted in every county to sell the popular Novelty Knives with name, address, photo, lodge emblem etc., on handle. Send stamp for catalogue. AGENTS EARN $75 to $300 A MONTH. (We show you how.)
Big profits—quick sales—exclusive territory. Write quick for our liberal money making special offer to agents. Our new self-sharpening scissors are the quickest sellers for lady agents. NOVELTY CUTLERY CO., 23 BAR STREET., CANTON, O.

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BY HELENA BALLARD WHITE.

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Begun in No. 26, June 29. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VIII.

The household was astir at daybreak the next morning. After partaking of a light breakfast Fabian paid the old lady handsomely for their crude lodging, and thanking her, the two travelers sprang into the buggy that waited outside and drove away with exultant, hopeful hearts. They talked joyfully together as the horses trotted briskly along, then Mercedes said:

"Perhaps we are too sure of triumph. We should not rejoice too soon since we would suffer all the more keenly should disappointment be in store. We might be on the wrong trail—that is possible, Fabian, so let's try to prepare ourselves."

"Afraid to hope, are you, dear? Well, I feel this morning that I have the fingers of fate tight in my own grasp. I am assured that within a few hours we shall stand face to face with Edith Burke."

"It was a long drive, even with the horses keeping up a steady pace, and Mercedes was much relieved when Fabian pointed to a house in the distance and said:

"That must be the place."

With their nerves on tap and their curiosity raised to the highest pitch, ten minutes later the two in pursuit of life, liberty and love, rapped at the door of a yellow farm house which, though very unpretentious, was better than anything they had as yet entered in that section.

The rancher himself opened the door, and Fabian sized up his man. He had never met Edith Burke's brother, but knew at once from the close resemblance of the two that the man before him was the one for whom he was looking.

When he had stated his business, the man said: "No, I never spoke to any one about selling my place here, still I might, providing I could get my price."

"You are Mr. Edward Brady, I suppose?" asked Fabian somewhat abruptly, purposely to study the effect of his words.

The man looked up and eyed him suspiciously for a moment, then said:

"I suppose I am, since I am the owner of the ranch. Ain't I the party you want to see?"

"Certainly. I just wanted to be assured, never having had the honor of an introduction. I'll just sit down and talk the matter over with you."

Just then entered a pale-faced woman with a fretful babe in her arms. No one else was about. Mercedes' face took on a look of disappointment, as she glanced cautiously around, then into the eyes of Fabian.

After introducing his wife the rancher ordered her to serve some cider, much as one would speak to a servant. He was disposed to be very affable to the strangers, however, probably having in view a handsome offer for his ranch.

"Well, you'll have to hold the baby, Ed, while I go for it," she replied.

"Nonsense, I don't want the kid. Go call Aunt Em."

The hearts of the travelers gave a bound simultaneously.

Stepping to a door and opening it slightly, the wife called to some one inside, but after a whispered conversation the child was passed through the door and the wife returned to do her husband's bidding.

"Evidently she doesn't care to face strangers," was Fabian's mental conclusion. "Very well, if she won't come out, I must find some way to intrude upon her privacy, and I must not be long about it, either."

With this end in view he now inquired about the size of the ranch, the number of cattle, etc., then said:

"I was very favorably impressed with the ranch as I drove along, but my wife is a bit hard to please in the way of a house. I don't know that this would exactly suit her. How many rooms have you?"

"Three below and two upstairs. This is our living-room and we have two bedrooms off."

"Perhaps I had better look over the house and see the arrangement. Much depends on the size of the rooms."

"Well, I suppose there is no objection to your looking about, is there, Molly? My wife thinks this is a pretty convenient house."

"Yes, it is the best around here," she answered, "but if you will take the strangers upstairs first I will tidy the rooms down here a little. What with the baby frettin' and so much work to do, churnin' and the like, I ain't found time to put things in order yet."

Fearing the woman closeted in the next room might step out in their absence, Fabian turned to Mercedes and said:

"You needn't come up, Tommy; you can't tell much what your mother likes."

During his absence the door upon which Mercedes had riveted her eyes was cautiously opened and a woman's head came through, but it quickly disappeared as the owner caught sight of Mercedes.

"I wonder what she is up to," thought Mercedes. "What a fright! It must be the aunt."

Hastily rising she went and tapped at the door. When it opened she said:

"Pardon me, madam, but I am very thirsty and would be greatly obliged if you would tell me where I can get a drink of water."

"In the bucket in the other room just off—that one over there," said the woman, hastily closing the door again.

Just at this moment Fabian returned with the rancher. The latter walked over to the room which held the mysterious occupant and threw open the door. Fabian stepped inside. As he did so his eye wandered to a decrepit looking individual in quaint feminine attire who sat trying to quiet the fretful babe. She seemed to pay no attention to the strangers, but as Fabian passed out she raised her head and turned on him a furtive glance.

At the same moment he looked back and their eyes met. The woman started up excitedly.

"She suspects something," thought Fabian. "She couldn't possibly believe it to be me, but probably knows that some one is disguised. I must try to throw her off." So, apologizing for the intrusion and courteously raising his hat, he bade her a pleasant good day.

"Am I recognized?" was the question which each put to himself some moments later.

"If that isn't Fabian Fitzgerald it is his ghost!' the woman told herself. "Only once before have I seen such eyes. Then his voice and superb courtesy, could any other possess it? My Heaven, what a mystery! It is like seeing the dead! If it isn't the priest, it is certainly some relative who is a dead ringer in manner and speech. He's made up, whoever it is—he wore a disguise. How true is the saying that 'it takes a rogue to catch a rogue!'—and come to think of it—the boy—his face is familiar. Where have I seen that boy before. I believe in my heart that I looked into the eyes of Fabian Fitzgerald. How they haunt me! If so, how comes it that he is not dead? What trick have these Catholics played? He certainly lives—he is on my trail—those eyes! those eyes! If it is the priest and he has escaped the law by some trick, I will soon put the officers on. Perhaps the fathers found some body closely resembling him and palmed it off for the prisoner in some way. Well, this is too much for me to think out. I must be thinking about something else—my escape from here. I wonder if it can be managed at once, before he can get word to the officers to place me under arrest. We will see."

"It is Edith Burke, as I surmised. I will speedily make her my prisoner," thought Fabian. "It won't do to take her by force now. It might end in a bloody scuffle. That brother is a typical cowboy and would let go his gun without a moment's warning. It were best to employ other tactics. I will drive on to the nearest village and leave Mercedes, then return with assistance when night has fallen, and they cannot see our approach. She probably will not get away in the meantime. Had I really known that I would find my prisoner here I would have made different arrangements. I wonder if it is safe to leave. I could tell from her manner that she suspects something. Since I am dead to the world she could not for a moment have any suspicion that I am after her. She has an idea that somebody is hot on her trail, though, I fear; her manner certainly betrayed this. I am hoping that I threw her off, but she's a fox—Edith Burke is a fox!"

Now turning his attention to the ranchman, he expressed his satisfaction as to the house and began to talk of the stock.

"If you'll come now I'll show you around. You never saw finer cattle than I have," said the ranchman, and the two passed out.

"You can just wait around here until I return, Tommy," said Fabian, looking back as he reached the door, and Mercedes took her cue, not once letting her eye wander from the room which held their prey.

In a short time Fabian returned, and calling to Mercedes, bade the ranchman adieu, and being directed to the nearest village, ostensibly to put up for the night, the two drove on.

"Think of it, Mercedes, within a few hours I shall face the world a free man," said her companion as soon as they were beyond hearing.

"Oh, Fabian, I believe you are right. Surely the woman was disguised for some purpose, though her make-up was hard to penetrate. You think there can be no mistake, Fabian?"

"Of that I am positive. She is the one we are after. It was Edith Burke and none other. The trouble is, I fear, that she suspects something. Of course she could not know me or have the least suspicion in this direction, since she believes me buried, but how she jumped up and stared at me when I wheeled about as I left the room. Of course she is constantly on the lookout for detectives on account of looting the insurance company; that is, she must be in fear of this, so she probably thinks one may be after her for that swindle. I will procure an officer and drive back after night or return and capture her unaided."

"If she suspected you, she might leave at once, before you can get back.'

"I think I succeeded in making that brother of hers believe that I really want to buy his ranch and was there for no other purpose, and while she might have thought me a detective, I think she felt safe in her disguise. I pretended to suspect nothing, and really believe that I threw her off. I think I shall find her there when I return, all right," answered Fabian, confidently.

"I am so nervous I can scarcely breathe—or so happy, or something," said Mercedes. "Anyhow, my heart is jumping terribly. This all seems too good to be true. What a clever detective you are, Fabian. I fear you missed your calling."

"Of that there is little doubt," laughed her companion, as he lashed the horses. Thus in high glee the two went spinning over the prairies.

CHAPTER IX.

By the time they had reached the village and dined at the small tavern, night was coming on, and Fabian made preparation to start back to the ranch for his prisoner at once. He concluded it were better for him to drive on alone and engage the rancher in conversation, that he could have him covered with his revolver by the time the officer presented himself, and leave the latter to look after the woman. He felt that Ed Burke would not be an easy one to handle if given any chance at all.

Mercedes, who insisted upon knowing his plan of action, was greatly troubled in mind as she watched him drive away. She sat down at an upper window of the tavern to wait for his return. It seemed the hours would never pass. She rose and walked restlessly about, running to the window, then to the stairway, at any unusual noise. As the time passed she became more and more alarmed, knowing the danger which he faced. He had had plenty of time to make the trip to the ranch and back again. What could be the meaning of this delay?

After another hour of faithful watching, she sank down upon the small sofa, her face buried in her palms in utter misery. While in this attitude she heard some one step into the room and quickly looked up.

"Fabian, at last!" she cried. "What is the news?" She could tell from his expression that something had gone very wrong.

"She's fled—not on the premises when I arrived. Neither she nor her brother. Evidently they know that some one is after them."

"Did you talk with the wife? Couldn't she——"

"She was in bed when I reached there and told me that she supposed both were arou[illegible] somewhere until we investigated. She insisted that little preparation could have been made for their flight or she would have observed. I am sure that [illegible] wife is honest, for she is very bitter toward both and would spare them nothing. But we have no time to spend here, Mercedes. Can't you understand what a serious situation this is for us?"

"What—what do you mean?" she gasped.

"It is possible that she knew me—the wife told me that when I left in the afternoon, that Edith Burke, or the aunt, at once held a whispered conversation with her brother. She overheard her say to him that she had seen me before and I was not there for the purpose of buying the ranch. So now, if she really penetrated my disguise, she will undoubtedly communicate with the chief of police in Chicago and try to have me placed under arrest again. We must prepare ourselves for any emergency and leave here immediately."

"Oh, how dreadful—how dreadful! What shall we do? Where can we go, Fabian?"

"The horses are outside. We will get away from here, then discuss our plans, so hurry into your wraps, my dear. We can better take the chances of getting lost out on the prairies than to hang around here any longer. I will go down and mislead the landlord as to the direction we are taking while you are getting ready."

"I'll be down in less than five minutes, Fabian. But what a disappointment, and what a plight we are in once again!"

"We will come out all right. Do not worry," he answered as he turned and hurried downstairs.

When they were out on the road some distance Mercedes said:

"You'll never be able to keep the path a black night like this, Fabian."

"All I can do is to try, Mercedes, but I fear this is going to prove a great trial to you. You must be very tired, dear one. Just tuck your head on my shoulder and try to sleep for a time."

"Oh, I could not possibly sleep, Fabian! Tell me where you think of going?"

"We shall try to run on to some farmhouse where we can put up for the night."

"Where do you think they could have gone—to Dodge City?"

"They might get there later on, Mercedes, but I think they would not venture to take a train out from any point near here just at this time, knowing or fearing that the depots would be closely watched. I believe they will hide around in this section for a week or so, and I intend to do the same and go on a still hunt."

They talked on for some time, when Mercedes suddenly asked:

"What is that great tall object looming up directly in front of us?"

"Why, that must be a windmill. But what does this mean? Are we off the road?"

He stopped his horses and jumping from the buggy struck a match.

"Sure enough, we are off the road, Mercedes—I can't tell how far. But don't be alarmed. I think we shall soon find it again. Are you very cold?"

"Oh, no—no. Do not bother about me, but I do hope we can find the road again.'

"Of course I shall, but it is a terribly black night."

After two hours spent in driving aimlessly over the barren fields, and a hairbreadth escape from going over quite a steep embankment bordering a stream, Fabian turned to Mercedes in despair:

"We might as well stop the horses right here and wait until daybreak before continuing our journey,' he said.

"But what is that right over there? It looks like a shed or one of those dugouts. I wonder if it could be a place where we might get shelter? Let us investigate. I—to be honest—I am almost perished with cold."

"Upon my life I believe you are right, Mercedes. Perhaps we are lucky enough to run on another kindly couple who will divide their one room with us. Most any sort of shelter would seem like Heaven just now. I, too, am chilled through. We'll drive over there and get the people up. If nothing better they may show us our way.'

As Mercedes surmised, it proved to be a dugout that they had chanced upon.

A vigorous pounding at the door, however, brought no response. After keeping this up for some time, Fabian said:

"Possibly they are not at home, or the place is deserted."

With this, he raised the latch and pushed heavily against the door. It yielded. Striking some matches he stepped inside and looked about. Not a soul was within. A few more matches revealed the fact that it was rudely furnished with skins, two bunks and a few other necessary articles. A sombrero and other cowboy's wearing apparel hung along the wall

"What luck! Evidently some cowboy's luxurious quarters. Let us take possession, Mercedes, and make ourselves at home, just like we had set up housekeeping. Thank Heaven, we are at least sheltered from the cold. How blue you look, little one. Here, sit down and I will have a fire in a moment. That armful of wood we will soon convert into a merry blaze. How cold your hands are, my dear, and how your teeth chatter."

As the flames shot up the chimney, Mercedes, soothed with the warmth, murmured:

"Indeed it seems as though we had struck Heaven, Fabian. I feel that I would be perfectly content to live on here always."

"I hope, dear one, that better things are in store for you," said Fabian, laughing. "I'll look around and see what the cupboard affords. Perhaps we might make a cup of coffee. That would warm you and make things a bit cozy. We've got to start housekeeping, you know."

Mercedes laughed merrily and jumped up to help take an inventory of the cowboy's possessions.

"Some potatoes in that sack, meal in that one, and oh, here is sugar—and, yes, as I live, there's some coffee, too. I'll make the coffee. I know best how to do it. Do you see any water about? Oh, there is a bucket with some. Everything at hand just like a fairy tale, Fabian."

"Just like being married and starting in housekeeping, Mercedes. How I wish we were. Never mind, we shall be before long."

"Don't be too hopeful, Fabian."

"Pshaw, I'll catch the old girl, don't bother. I venture they will be back on their ranch within a day or two, so in the morning I will throw off my present disguise, appropriate the cowboy's hat and clothes which hang on the wall and do a little reconnoitering."

"Won't the man of whom you rented the team become alarmed and get after you for a horsethief?"

"I was obliged to deposit with him the worth of the horses and rig before taking it out for so long. He has more than the value and no doubt is more in fear that I will return than that I will not. There will be no trouble from that source."

"Do you really think Edith Burke recognized you, and will have the authorities hunt us out, Fabian?"

"She could not have been positive enough of this to take such a step. I am dead and buried, according to the papers. No, I have come to the conclusion that she merely suspected a detective and did not associate me with him in any way. I'll be after her again tomorrow. Burke's wife told me that he had been trying to get her to sign a deed to the ranch, and he won't leave this

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section until she has done so or he has [illegible] another effort in this direction. I'll go over there again in the morning."

"Dear me, what if the cowboy should come back and find me here?"

"From the looks of things he has evidently just taken his departure. No doubt he has gone to Dodge City to take some cattle or buy some and when he gets there he is good to stay until all his money ha[illegible] whisky. Really, I believe that fate is now lending a helping hand. We could not find a better place to hide and here find everything handy to change my disguise. In the morning I shall be transformed into a cowboy, Mercedes. Then I'll venture back to the village which we just left, to invest in some provisions and some woman's apparel. You had better make yourself over into a girl—a schoolgirl in short skirts, since our enemies will be looking for a boy."

"That is a happy suggestion, Fabian—but, dear me, the coffee is all boiling over."

Their spirits greatly revived by the blaze and general comfort of their surroundings, the two laughed and talked merrily together for an hour or so, then Fabian told Mercedes to curl herself up on one of the hard bunks and cover herself with the skins while he would seek the other.

CHAPTER X.

"Where in the world am I?" yawned Mercedes as she wakened from a sound slumber the following morning. "Oh, yes, in the dugout," as she rubbed her eyes and sat up. Looking about she was surprised not to see Fabian. She observed that a fire had been kindled, and yes, a note lay on the table. Taking it up she read, "I have gone to the village. [illegible] I can."

Turning to the mirror, Mercedes let down her hair and commenced to brush it.

"Indeed, I shall be glad to lay off that old wig and be a girl once again," she murmured. "Guess I'd better do my hair in two long braids and let it hang down my back schoolgirl fashion. I wonder if Fabian will get all the things I told him to. I do not believe——"

Her thoughts were interrupted by a step on the outside.

"Fabian has returned already," she murmured, turning about.

But no, it was not the priest that she now faced. To her horror and amazement, she saw standing in the doorway none other than Edith Burke. She was no longer in her old woman's disguise. Each stood petrified with fear, wildly staring into the eyes of the other for a moment, then Mercedes whipped out her revolver from a hip pocket.

"Don't move an inch or I will shoot you through the heart," she cried.

"Oh!" gasped the woman, clutching at the door-sill. Then collecting her wits said: "Anything to please your ladyship, but [illegible] the happening."

"Sit down in that chair—sit down, I say. Don't dare to run or I will kill you without a moment's warning," insisted Mercedes, as she approached, still covering the woman with her revolver.

The one thus guarded could do nothing but advance to the chair and sink upon it.

"Now sit there until I get ready to let you go, if you value your life."

"Perhaps I am armed myself; you did not think of that," answered the prisoner as she fumbled with her skirts.

"Hold up your hands or I will shoot you through. I am a good marksman, I would have you know," said the courageous girl.

"Is that so? Strange you didn't shoot instead of drown yourself then," replied the other with a [illegible] laugh [illegible] her hands. "The world would have been [illegible]."

[illegible] Mercedes [illegible]

[illegible] next time he is lodged behind the bars. He won't escape the gallows another time."

"I hold you as prisoner, Edith Burke. While you live, he cannot be accused. You shall leave this place only with the officers of the law."

"You speak with great assurance. Assurance may come my way first. Then you will do well if you escape with your life. The revolver which you hold may be turned on yourself."

Now greatly alarmed, it was difficult for Mercedes to keep a steady aim. Her hand trembled visibly. "If Fabian would only come! If Fabian would only come," was her constant inward cry.

"Dear me, how your hand trembles! Aren't you getting tired holding it so? I must confess that it is very tiresome to me."

"You will be more tired before you get through with this deeply conceived and villainous plot."

"I think I shall laugh last," answered the prisoner nonchalantly.

"You are surprisingly bold," observed Mercedes.

"Still not bold enough to travel around the country with a man to whom I am not married," returned the audacious creature.

"How dare you?" said Mercedes, taking a step nearer her victim.

"Never mind—just stay where you are. You can shoot quite as well from that point. On second thought, I should know that the fact of his being a priest is in itself a protection. Then I know something of his tendencies. Oh, no, Fabian Fitzgerald would not take unfair advantage of a woman."

"Not another word of that sort!" exclaimed Mercedes hotly.

"Really, I feel great sympathy for you, my dear, for once I was just as young and ignorant and innocent and unsuspecting as yourself. Dear me! What sorrow lies in the future for you! I do not envy——"

A step was heard outside.

"Fabian!" called Mercedes.

"[illegible]," cried the other.

It was a strange sight that met the eye of Fabian Fitzgerald as he now entered the underground room.

Taking in the situation at a glance, he called:

"Bravo, my girl! Just hold that position a moment longer."

"Fabian Fitzgerald!" cried the woman almost reeling from her chair.

Fabian took a step toward her when suddenly another form darted through the doorway and he was dealt a blow from behind that felled him to the floor. The weapon was then dashed from [illegible] hand, and Ed Burke turned and fled, closely [illegible].

With a shriek Mercedes fell upon the floor beside her lover. She had some trouble in bringing him to, but after a little while he sat up and looked about.

"Did they get away? Another disappointment to face, Mercedes—and after such a heroic attempt on your part to hold the enemy, my dear. It's a shame. Let me compliment your pluck, little girl."

"I was terribly brave, wasn't I, Fabian? But tell me, doesn't your head hurt dreadfully, dear? My, what a bump on the side. Sure there's no fracture?"

"No, it doesn't amount to anything. I shall be all right directly," he answered, rising. "I traded the rig and horses for [illegible], Mercedes. They are in the shed outside. I will mount one of them and start at once after the fugitives. They will make for the village, no doubt, and try to take the first train out. I must prevent this."

"If they get there first they might try to have you placed under arrest, Fabian."

"I guess they will want to keep still about that—but I must be off, Mercedes."

"Oh, Fabian! I fear for your life."

"I am ready to meet any two men with a gun, Mercedes. Then I shall have the advantage, being in the rear. I secured a good pair of ponies—they can go like the wind."

"I'll jump on one and go with you."

"No, Mercedes, you would only prove a hindrance."

"[illegible] don't go—it is such a risk!"

"[illegible] the chances, Mercedes. I [illegible] enough. Have courage, my angel."

"Oh, Fabian, don't!" cried Mercedes, now quite overcome.

[illegible] he stooped and fondly kissing [illegible]

"It is best that I go. Now be a brave little girl and stay here until I get back."

With this, he slapped on his sombrero and hurried away.

Mercedes ran outside and looked after him. As he jumped on the pony and shot away, she cried in her woman's heart, "Fabian, come back! Fabian, come back!"

But he only looked around, raised his hat and galloped ahead.

She stood for a moment watching him, then looking [illegible] saw the fugitives far in advance.

"It is true, they are making for the village," she murmured. "I wonder if he can [illegible] his fate? It is two against one. What a coward I am to remain behind. I shall not!" was her hasty conclusion. "If they kill him I want to die with him."

So running to the pony just as she was, bareheaded, with her boy's clothes on, and hair streaming, she sprang on its back and went flying after her lover.

As she drew nearer, she was surprised to see the riders ahead turn in their saddles, take a look back, then start up their ponies. A mad race followed. Then as Fabian gained upon them, the rancher, turning about in his saddle and riding with his back to the pony's head, apparently with as great ease as the other way, leveled a six-shooter. Another moment and a shot rang [illegible].

Mercedes almost reeled from her saddle. She saw Fabian duck his head, though. [illegible]

[illegible] she gasped as she went [illegible] to the scene.

As she came up, the sister, Edith Burke, [illegible] though to surrender.

Fabian advanced to meet her.

"Don't shoot," she called, "I am unarmed. I am your prisoner. My God! Have you killed my brother, Fabian Fitzgerald?"

"I hope not. We will return and see," he said, now turning about and riding at her side. As he did so he faced Mercedes who had just come up.

"Thank Heaven, Fabian, that you are safe. [illegible] if he is killed. I wouldn't want it to be so bad as all that."

Fabian now sprang from his pony as did the others to examine the man lying helpless by the roadside. As he stooped and put his hand on the fellow's heart, Mercedes kept an eye on their prisoner. She was [illegible] to see the woman slyly draw a revolver from under her jacket. Before she had time to raise it Mercedes pressed the muzzle of her own against the woman's cheek. "Drop that or I will kill you in a second," she said, hoarse with fear.

Fabian looked up and at once sprang forward and disarmed the woman.

"Treacherous jade!" he said. "I'll not trust you a moment longer. Just keep steady there, Mercedes, while I get a bridle from the pony to bind her."

This took but a few seconds. "Now ride ahead, Mercedes, to the village for a constable and a doctor. I guess we have at last reached the end," he said, smiling into her face.

It was with a sigh of relief that they now heard the man on the grass utter a groan.

"Hurry as fast as you can, Mercedes," said Fabian, but upon looking up he found that she was already beyond hearing.

By the time [illegible] formed her errand and returned, the wounded man had regained consciousness and was sitting up. The doctor discovered that he was not seriously injured, so Fabian had his two prisoners placed under arrest.

Great was the rejoicing of the lovers when the excitement of the arrest had passed.

"God only knows how good it seems to stand before the world an innocent man!" breathed Fabian. "And you, my dear girl, [illegible] Wonderful pluck and courage you have shown for a little convent girl. How proud I am of you. But we must get married, Mercedes, at once."

"You mean before we return to Chicago?"

"Certainly."

"Here in this dugout and in these funny [illegible] village?"

He laughed amusedly. "[illegible] marriage, Mercedes. But make yourself ready and gather up the traps while I go for a justice and the license. Of course you would not be satisfied without a marriage in your own faith and that we can celebrate after we reach home."

"Is there no priest in the village?"

"No, I investigated that matter this morning. So, my whimsical beauty, you will have to be satisfied for the present with the service which I can procure, for you must return as Mrs. Fabian Fitzgerald."

A few days following, the bride and groom in company with two officers from Chicago were taking their prisoners back to the seat of their crime.

By the time they arrived, the climax to this strange tragedy had reached the newspapers, and as the newly wedded pair stepped from the train they found themselves at once surrounded by a wild mob of curious onlookers, while numerous friends pushed their way through the crowd to grasp the hand of each and express their joy and astonishment at the wonderful revelation.

"The saints be praised! It is really our beloved priest whom we have mourned as dead," came from many honest hearts.

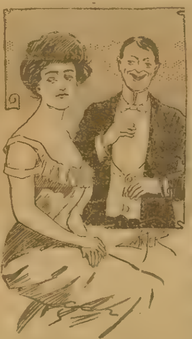
Finally freeing themselves from the throng of excited, worshipful followers, they were placed in a carriage and driven to the parish house.

A wedding followed a few days later, with all the brilliancy that Mercedes' girlish mind had pictured. Fabian preferred one of the quietest [illegible] possible, but gave in to her wishes. It was said to have created more interest than any that had ever before taken place in the city. By this time every one was in sympathy with the lovers and anxious to atone for all past condemnation.

After the ceremony the [illegible] couple left for a serene little spot in the South to enjoy their honeymoon and a complete rest.

"I have renewed an infinite faith in the ultimate justice of all things," whispered Fabian, when once again they found themselves speeding away over the country.

(The end.)



Reggy—Girls merely amuse me. You can bet your life none of them will ever catch me.

Polly—I guess you're right. They say "the biggest fish always get away," and I suppose that applies as well to the biggest lobsters.

Two Sides to It.

I had a colored man working for me in a warehouse at $20 per month," said the Georgia man, "and a few weeks ago he came to me and said:

"'Mars Phillips, I ain't dun satisfied and I'se gwine to strike for higher wages. I wants $30 a month or out I goes.'

"'Look here, George,' I said in reply, 'I am also dissatisfied and am going to strike. I don't think you are worth $20 a month, and if you won't take $15 you can go.'

"He went away and thought it over for awhile and then returned to say:

"'Look here, Mars Phillips. Mebbe I hain't got dis yere business right.'

"'As to how?' I asked.

"'Bout de strikin'.'

"'That was all right. You struck for $30 a month.'

"'Sartin I did; but you turned right around and struck [illegible]'

"'Yes, and that [illegible] right, too. Didn't you know there we[illegible] sides to a strike?'

"'[illegible]ah. Just thought dere was one side to it, and dat side was all mine. 'Pears like I had got all muddled up and I want to do sunthin'.'

"'Well, what is it?'

"'I want to call my strike off, and I want to go back to work again for $20 a month and jest break my ole back floppin' dem bar'ls or lime around de w[illegible].'

"I agreed to the proposal, and he is working for me at the old wages and whistling in contentment."

NOT FOR THEM.

"Did you ever see a homelier girl in your life?"

Dick Culver nodded his head emphatically in the direction of a young woman who [illegible] a drowsy afternoon at [illegible] suit. The two friends, always insepar[illegible] had wandered there for a couple of week's vacation. They were both tall, handsome chaps with plenty of money and—extraordinary as this may seem—good habits.

"She certainly is not much on looks," replied Billy Trent. "Well, my boy, we didn't come here to flirt. We came for a rest."

"And if that's a [illegible] we'll get it all [illegible] she's a poor [illegible] to chase around with a [illegible]."

"What would you say was the matter with her?"

"Well, just analyze it and see. She certainly isn't much on figure. She has hair, but it's the thin, wavy ki[illegible] it. As for her face from the [illegible] certainly isn't prepossessing. And apparently, she's the only girl here."

"Never mind. We can fish."

Twenty-four hours later the two [illegible] again sat in the same place.

"I saw you talking with that homely girl, Billy."

"Yes, proprietor's wife introduced us. Why didn't you come up?"

"She's too homely for me. I draw the line."

"Yes, she is—no doubt about that [illegible] when you get near and look at h[illegible] you don't mind it so much. Sh[illegible] rather sweet sm[illegible]"

Another d[illegible] her.

"By the [illegible] quainted, di[illegible] How do you like [illegible]"

"Well, I must confess I was agreeably disappointed. As you said, she has a sweet smile. And, then, when she speaks, did you notice how her eyes light up? Nice eyes."

"Yes, good ey[illegible]"

[illegible]

The next day at about the same hour the two friends again sat together.

"I see, Billy, you had Miss Crabbe out [illegible]

[illegible] dispositio[illegible]

"So I thought. Do you know, I rather [illegible] own.

"I don't know but I do, too. Lovely teeth."

[illegible]

"I thought perha[illegible]"

"In that case I'll [illegible] noon," apologetically. "In a place [illegible] there's really nothing much else to do."

"[illegible] it's so," in the same tone. "We [illegible]"

[illegible] the next week the two friends [illegible] each other. They were pretty busy. But so honorable were [illegible]

"No." He turned and looked his friend full in the face. "I suppose," he said, "that [illegible] in love—with Miss Crabbe."

"So am I."

"I know it. Sweetest, loveliest girl I ever met, isn't she?"

Dick's voice wavered.

"This morning," he said, "I asked her to marry me and, by Jove! she turned down."

Billy's voice [illegible].

"Pretty tough, old man," he said. "This afternoon I did the same thing and she turned me down."

He put his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I guess we'll have to live it down," he said. "But do you know what the matter is?"

[illegible] Billy nodded.

"Yes, he replied softly, "that's it, old fellow. The fa[illegible] too good for either of us!"—Life.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE SIGNOR ARRIVES.

By this time Pete had grasped the idea, and knew what was wanted.

He was immediately down on hands and knees and from one of the lockers produced the box of curious globes which the young aeronaut used to renew the gas in his balloon.

"Here they are," he exclaimed.

Bob lost no time in breaking one.

The other balloon had before now settled somewhere outside the fair grounds, and it could be put down as a positive fact that the signor would make his way upon the scene with all the haste possible to claim the child.

Slowly the great silk bag began to assume its full shape, and to tug more violently at the posts to which it was attached.

Bob had made no attempt to add any more ballast, since it was his intention to take another passenger aloft.

These were points that had to be considered, but fortunately he could think while he worked.

He had these things down to a fine point, knew the capacity of the balloon in lifting power and just how much ballast would be needed.

An aeronaut guesses at nothing.

It is like playing with fire, handling one of these gas monsters, for a single miscalculation might be followed by instantaneous death.

Hence men who go miles above the earth's surface, suspended as it were like the sword of Damocles by a single hair, make sure of certain facts before they take the awful risk.

Mrs. Muscroft still stood there holding the figure of Petite Barbara in her arms.

All the love of her nature shone in her face.

The people who crowded around to see these unique proceedings in the dim light of coming evening, could not but be somewhat awed by her looks.

They realized in a measure that some sort of a drama in real life was being played here.

Bob made all the haste possible, but he could not go beyond a certain limit.

Given ten minutes more time and the balloon would be filled.

Then all that remained would be to enter the basket and cut the ropes.

Unless the professor was engaged in the same business that occupied their attention, the other balloon would not be in any condition to follow after them.

Now the time had been reduced.

Eight minutes would see them through.

Would it be given?

Bob had serious doubts upon the matter, although he did not even have to speculate as to what source their trouble would come from.

He was not greatly surprised, therefore, when a gruff voice suddenly cried out:

"Let me through here—I tell you I'm after my child—let me through."

Ah! the signor had arrived.

He had passed through an experience in his perilous voyage above the clouds that would never be forgotten.

At least it had not done his ugly erascible temper any good, for he seemed to be fuming like a bear with a sore head.

Bob scented trouble.

He put his hand to his pocket and drew out the marshal's revolver.

It had already served him one good turn, and, according to the saying, that deserved another.

This he laid down within reach.

There was a set look upon Bob's face, a gritting of the teeth, as though he realized the presence of a crisis, and was prepared to meet it.

There was a commotion in the crowd.

A man pushed his way through.

Sure enough it was the ex-circus performer, looking more gaunt and sallow than ever.

His eyes were inflamed, as though he had been imbibing considerable quantities of liquor in order to keep his blood from being chilled while in the frosty regions miles above.

At any rate Signor Carasina was in a mood that could be marked dangerous.

When a man of his fiery, passionate nature is balked time and again in some game upon the accomplishment of which he has set his heart, all the worse elements are apt to be aroused, and he is in a fit condition for a desperate piece of business.

That fitted the Italian's case.

Now that he had caught up with those who had defied him so long, he would not hesitate to let them feel the weight of his anger.

Those who crossed the will of Signor Carasina usually repented it.

So he came pushing through the crowd, which being a good natured one, readily gave way before his assault.

As he advanced he uttered an occasional bull-like roar, which seemed like steam escaping from the safety valve of an engine.

At length he burst through the last line and stood in the little open space which the crowd had generously allowed to remain.

"There you are, little wretch. Run away from your daddy, will you? We'll have no more of this nonsense—come with me."

He attempted to take the hand of the shrinking Petite Barbara, but found an indignant woman before him.

Astonished, he stood there.

"My child—I demand my child—I must have her," he continued to repeat.

"She refuses to leave me—she fears you."

"But—who are you—woman?"

"The child's mother," came the answer, and the Italian fell back a pace.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHARMED BY A SERPENT.

Although the signor seemed taken aback by the declaration of Mrs. Muscroft that she was the little girl's mother, he was not yet done.

Such men do not give up a cherished object because of rapids in the river.

The best thing in Bob's mind was [illegible] lapse of time. If this little by-play would only keep on for a space of six minutes more, the balloon would be in a condition to bear them heavenward.

Sometimes a brief space of time may seem like an eternity to an anxious soul, longing for a certain hour to arrive.

So Bob counted the passage of time by the pulsations of his heart, which in the excitement of the moment seemed to beat with the voice and violence of a trip-hammer.

The signor returned to the attack again.

"This child is mine—I can prove it where we have lived. She must go with me. As her father I have a right to take her," he declared, and several in the crowd nodded their heads.

"And I claim her by the divine right of a mother. She belongs to me, and you shall not take her away," declared the aroused lady.

"Well, madam, if you have any claim on her you can put it in later. She was stolen by these young rascals. I have come for her, and in my company she will return."

"Stop; we will decide this matter by the fairest test in all the world."

"How?" asked Carasina.

"The girl herself shall settle the question."

"I object," the Italian said, frowning.

The lady turned to the crowd.

"Is what I have said a fair proposition—shall we let her heart speak?" she demanded.

"Yes, yes," came back.

"Let the child decide it."

The lady turned.

"Barbara, you see that man yonder—he claims to be your father. I know better, because I believe you are my own child. He demands that you return with him. Which will you do?"

The Italian forced a smile on his dark face.

He held out his arms.

His attitude was dramatic enough, but it wholly lacked sincerity.

It failed to appeal to the heart.

Petite Barbara had lived with him for years, but she could remember no occasion when she felt the slightest love for this cruel man.

Fear had compelled her to obey, and do as he wished in the circus ring.

When therefore she saw the Italian standing there in an attitude of entreaty, the situation was more ludicrous to her than affecting, and only for her old fear of the man she must have laughed outright.

She hesitated only a short time.

Then turning she threw her arms around the neck of the gentle lady who called her daughter.

"I will stay with you," she said.

There was something of a sensation among the constituent parts of the great crowd.

People like this sort of thing on the stage, and it excites even more interest in real life.

As for Bob, he had one eye on his watch and was muttering:

"Thank goodness—just four minutes more."

Evidently he was anxious to be once more soaring the air far, far beyond reach of the maddening crowd.

The Italian changed his looks.

Since that heavenly smile, those appealing extended arms failed to accomplish the end he had in view, he must try more drastic measures.

He was a man who in times gone by had been in the habit of having his way.

Few people cared to dispute him, since his temper was exceedingly peppery, and he could go into a tantrum that made spectators shudder.

So Signor Carasina prepared to excite himself to make a hideous spectacle.

If gentle, persuasive measures had failed, he would try the opposite.

It was the old battle between the sun and the wind again.

The change was almost instantaneous, and those who looked upon the dark face of the enraged Italian shuddered.

Even the lady seemed dismayed.

He began to advance.

His action was stealthy, much as that by means of which the cat creeps upon its prey.

His eyes were fastened upon Barbara—they fascinated the child even as the orbs of a snake might charm a bird.

The scene was an impressive one.

As he advanced [illegible] toward the child [illegible] fingers worked [illegible]

It was [illegible] balloon, the jostling crowd now hushed to a death-like silence, the charming child and her protectress, and last of all that dark-faced man slowly drawing nearer and nearer his intended prey.

How would it end?

Bob was in the basket busy with his work and counting the seconds until he could pronounce it finished.

The Italian had advanced until he was now quite close to Petite Barbara, who had no power to flee, but stood as though turned to stone.

But another actor came into the game.

"Stop!"

It was Pete who called out—Pete who leveled the faithful Marlin repeating rifle at the Italian's breast.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

Of course the signor halted.

A man must be a fool who would not, upon finding such a deadly weapon on a line with his heart.

More time gained for Bob.

Perhaps the new complication that promised to rise would give him a chance to finish all matters, and bring about the concluding crisis.

The Italian was baffled, but not yet beaten.

He was able to open a specious plea and turned to the people nearby for backing.

What he proposed, to bring the conflicting claims before a local magistrate, seemed honest enough, and there were mutterings heard in favor of such a course.

Even Bob could not ignore them.

He had only one more bomb to break, when the balloon would be filled.

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Standing there in the basket, he proceeded to show Signor Carasina up in his true light, and as his indignation arose he rubbed it in with no light hand.

The Italian fumed and raved.

He cursed in three languages, and looked as if he could murder Bob on the spot, but all the same he did not spring forward, and looks never kill.

Pete was still on guard.

The crowd was inclined to favor Bob again when he explained how those who pursued had endeavored to effect their destruction by every device known to sky travelers.

It looked as though the Italian might be mobbed, for dark and threatening glances were cast in his direction.

Just as luck would have it, something occurred at this juncture, something that was apt to tell against our friends.

They say Satan looks out for his own, and it certainly appears at times as though there might be considerable truth in this remark.

Thus, when the signor's case looked gloomy, who should turn up but Squire Muscroft.

He did not present his usual appearance, for as a general thing he was exceedingly neat in his dress, even carrying it to the point of being called a dandy.

Just now he looked as though he had passed through a threshing machine.

His hat was gone, his clothes torn and dusty, the collar of his shirt burst open and standing up at right angles.

In short he appeared dilapidated—disreputable.

But for his well known florid face and carroty hair, many of the good people of the town might not have recognized him.

It was evident that the squire had had a hard experience in trying to ride without a saddle the horse which Bob had left for him.

Undoubtedly he had fallen off a number of times, and perhaps even tumbled in the road.

Such an experience is rather trying on the patience, and bombastic Squire Muscroft had never been known to possess too much of that staple article.

He was a domineering old fellow, autocratic in his bearing, jovial when in good company, but hard as iron in business matters.

Heaven help the man who was in his debt.

This then was the apparition that suddenly dawned upon their vision.

He still sat upon the saddleless horse, and the crowd gave way before his advance.

One man at least hailed his coming.

This was the signor.

Sorely distressed and hardly knowing which way to turn in order to gain his point, he heard the voice of the squire, and at once plucked up fresh courage, since they had had many dealings in common.

The game was not yet lost.

True, so long as Pete and the gun was there he would not dare advance, but he could safely leave the matter to the tricky squire, who possessed the silver-tongued qualities of an orator, and could doubtless sway public opinion.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the stout justice as he sat on his horse.

The signor at once loudly made his claim, and declared his readiness to have its justness decided before any legal authority.

It seemed so reasonable.

Squire Muscroft opened his batteries.

The uneasy prancing of his steed probably spoiled some of his best oratorical flights, for it was hardly edifying when reaching a supreme point, to have his horse rear and be compelled to clasp both arms around the animal's neck in order to escape a sudden tumble.

There were men present whom business placed under the squire's thumb.

They sneezed when he took snuff.

In a word, they dared not call their souls their own when this tyrant willed otherwise.

A few such men scattered in a crowd will act like yeast in the dough, and if allowed to work their sweet will must soon leaven the whole.

As the squire proceeded, these fellows began to cheer in an hysterical way, and aroused something like enthusiasm.

Bob had finished his work.

He took in the situation and saw that it must be a battle royal—he believed the real sympathies of the crowd were with them, if he could only find the right way to awaken them.

Hardly had the squire completed giving his orders for the two boys to be seized than Bob snatched the gun from the hands of Pete and faced his enemy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ORATOR BOB.

It was a moment when a determined stand could accomplish wonders.

A crowd is easily swayed when one knows the secret power to be used.

Such knowledge accounts for the success of certain silver-tongued orators.

Bob had never analyzed the matter, but he had a consciousness of the justness of his cause, and this is much in a matter of the kind.

When he snatched the gun from the hands of Parachute Pete, it was not with the idea that he would be compelled to use it, unless on the crafty Italian.

He said something to his companion at the same time, and Pete, bending over, proceeded to lift little Barbara into the basket.

Thus, in short order, as Mrs. Muscroft followed they were all inside.

Should the rope be cut, nothing could prevent their sudden departure.

The balloon was only too anxious to depart and strained at the moorings as though impatient for the moment to come when liberty would be given.

Bob heard the muttering in the crowd.

He held up his hand for silence.

"Let the young fellow speak," cried a voice, and Bob recognized in the light thrown upon the scene by neighboring fires and torches, the friendly sheriff or marshal whose peculiar tactics had assisted him before.

Bob began.

He made the effort of his life.

To relate his own story in brief, sketch the venturesome trip of the balloon and the dastardly attempts of their enemies to wreck them in midair, speak of the mystery which was cleared up by the discovery of his mother and the miserable plot by means of which Squire Muscroft sought to defraud his sister.

Several times the squire sought to interrupt but an outcry was heard.

"Let him speak," bellowed the good marshal.

The crowd had become interested and loved fair play.

"This lady is my mother. I have found her, and we do not mean to let his cruel plans separate us again. For years I have been compelled to gain a living in the circus ring, while she has been shut up as one whose mind was weak, while he, the monster yonder, enjoyed the estate left to us by my father. I do not know what prevents me from shooting him on the spot, for when I think of all he has done, and what he planned for the future, my very blood boils with indignation."

The squire had grown uneasy.

When he saw the gun swing around in his direction he made haste to put another man between his precious body and the weapon, and behind this shelter he could shake his fist and raise his voice in thundering rage.

"All I want is to take my mother away from his hands. I appeal to every one of you, by the love you bear your own mothers to give me a show. I am unknown to you, but surely you will believe this lady whom some of you must be acquainted with, when she declares that all I have said is gospel truth."

"I believe it, for one!"

It was Andy who spoke, Andy who had just reached the ground accompanied by the other squire, determined to seize upon this opportunity to down his hated rival.

All that was needed was a leader.

Sheep follow the bell wether regardless of where he leads them.

So when this friend called out so boldly others echoed his words.

In vain the squire raved and fumed—threats and promises alike could not move the crowd, kept in line by sagacious Andy and the marshal.

Muscroft looked as red as a turkey cock, and there were those who declared the old squire would surely "bust his biler" if he wasn't careful.

"My friends, you have family ties, those you love at home. You can sympathize with a poor mother who has all these years been robbed of her children. You will not let him separate us again, this miserable old scoundrel who has deceived you so long," continued Bob.

"No, no," cried Andy.

"Never more," called the marshal from the rear.

"Down with the old plotter!" came in another voice, for several members of the crowd were growing bolder.

"A blanket—bring a blanket," cried Andy.

As he hoped, this diverted the attention of the crowd from the balloon.

Squire Muscroft forgot to fume, and even some of the color left his face.

A sudden fear of violence swept over him—these people may have been with him so long as he seemed to prosper, but in his downfall they would rise and cast off the yoke they had borne so long.

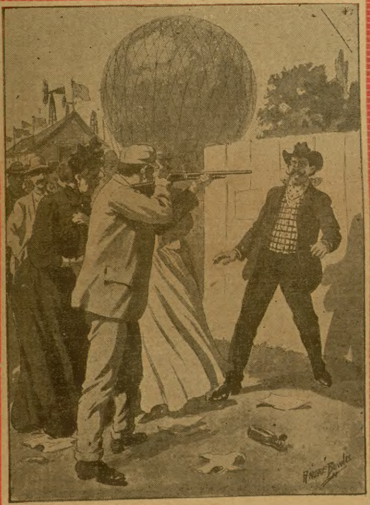
Bob saw his opportunity.

He spoke to Pete who all this time had kept his knife ready in hand.

"Is it all right, Pete?"

"Yes."

"Ready then."



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"Hold on, all. Cut loose, Pete."

It was done.

The balloon shot upward like a bird, amid the deafening cheers of the vast crowd.

CHAPTER XXV.

DRIFTING SOUTH.

Looking down while the balloon was rising, our friends saw many things.

The men had been quick to seize upon the suggestion offered by one of their number.

Old grudges could be worked off.

A blanket came to hand almost miraculously and in spite of his struggles the fat swearing squire was tumbled unceremoniously into it.

At such times men forget the consequences of such a rash act.

Our boys could hear them shout in concert:

"One, two, three, up!"

Then the fat squire went sailing upward with awful threats, and hardly landed in the blanket before he was tossed again.

This would be kept up until he had no longer breath remaining in his body—his prayers and threats alike unheeded.

It was in truth a terrible reckoning for the man whose base designs had kept Bob and his mother apart all these years.

Nor was this all they saw.

A man had burst his way through the crowd.

His manner was frantic.

They recognized in the one glimpse they had, the defeated Italian.

No doubt he fled, fearing lest some keen eyes might alight upon him, and the humor of the Michigan crowd delight in serving him with the same medicine with which the unhappy squire was dosed.

Would he give up the game then and there?

He had nothing to gain in a pecuniary way, since the squire was beaten, and could no longer be depended on to pay him monthly stipends for keeping the children from their mother.

Nothing?

Ah! with a man of his race, a Calabrian revenge is a leading factor.

They will sacrifice all else on earth in order to even up a sore.

It was the land of the vendetta, where hatred flourishes that he came from.

He would not give up the battle as long as a single chance remained.

So Bob thought.

He knew the signor could get back to the other balloon inside of ten minutes, and if the professor had been shrewd enough to have his air monster in readiness for further sky traveling, during the short interval that elapsed while his comrade was at the fair, they could start in pursuit with but a small advantage in favor of the boys.

Bob devoted himself to managing the balloon.

The sounds below grew fainter as they climbed into space.

At length not a single bit of noise assailed their ears, save perhaps the creaking of some rope.

Mrs. Muscroft had sunk down in the basket hugging Barbara close to her heart, for as was natural upon a first trip away from the earth's surface, she was overwhelmed with alarm.

Bob noted at once the fact that while there was no breeze blowing they drifted almost south.

It does not take much of a current of air to send a balloon along its course.

Upward they went.

Now their passage grew faster.

"Hurrah!" shouted Pete, filled with enthusiasm over the success of their recent venture.

It was not Bob's intention to go a great distance, if given an opportunity to anchor on Michigan soil in the morning.

If Heaven was kind and allowed them to drop down at dawn near some town, they would take the railroad for Lansing where their case could be put in the hands of a leading lawyer, who would at once take means to wire an order for the squire's arrest and being put under heavy bonds for trial on the charge of swindling his sister and nephew out of a fortune.

When some little time had elapsed, Pete discovered the other balloon.

It was some two miles in their rear.

Darkness had not come to the region of the upper air, and hence while the earth's surface below lay in utter blackness, they were still able to discern their rival.

The professor had mounted higher.

In this he made a mistake, for the atmosphere was even more sluggish in that quarter than where they floated.

Thus night closed in.

With it came darkness and clouds.

Still there was no wind.

They had lost sight of the other balloon entirely, and had the satisfaction of knowing that the enemy could no longer see them.

Time passed.

Their passage was a dreary one.

Clouds wrapped about them at times and again openings appeared.

They saw gleaming lights far below and knew some city lay there jeweled with her electric bands.

So midnight came and went.

Bob had taken turns with Pete in snatching sleep, for there was really nothing to do.

He felt happy over the joyous turn affairs had taken, and when during one of his watches his mother spoke, it opened a sympathetic conversation that was instrumental in explaining many things which had been mysteries in the past.

So the night wore on.

There came a change at length, when the peaceful calm of their voyage was broken and once more danger stared them in the face.

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CONTRASTS.

I have two ardent lovers,
  And a jealous pair are they;
Each one loves me very dearly,
  And each one in his own way.
But those ways are so opposing,
  And so different is their show,
Which one loves me more and better,
  I am puzzled quite to know.

One sees other girls are fairer—
  One sees none when I am by;
One has other interests save me—
  One has all when I am nigh.
Sometimes one will be resentful
  If neglectful I will prove;
The other only watches,
  And forgives all in his love.

One sometimes will cause me sorrow
  And some fickleness will show;
The other constant always,
  Never from my side will go,
Never doubts, but ever trusts me;
  While sometimes one spreads a fog;
I am not sure of my lover—
  But I'm certain of my dog.

THE MIDNIGHT INTRUDER.

There was a large party at the Chateau De Kerdall, near Vannes, France.

The Marquis De Kerdall and his young wife had just returned from a tour of the world, and they had celebrated their home-coming by gathering together all their friends and relatives at their beautiful country house.

Among the guests was old Doctor Cornabuc, an illustrious member of the Academy of Metaphysical Science, so original, so absent-minded, so venerable in his fair peruke and his costume of the fashion of 1850. Then there was Madam De Lartigues, an old friend of the Marquis, a brilliant and coquettish Parisienne. And there was Miss Hawthorne, an English maiden-lady with youthful propensities. And there were many others, all of whom found amusement to their hearts' content at Kerdall.

The rooms of the castle constituted a veritable museum, being stocked with rare and curious objects from two continents. And, finally, a menagerie had been created in one corner of the park and filled with the various animals which the Marquis had picked up during the tour and brought back to France for the purpose of acclimatization. There were gazelles, antelopes, Tibet goats, Nile ibises, flamingoes, opossums, beavers, and a Western African baboon of the mandrill species.

* * * * * *

How long Madam De Lartigues slept she knew not. She was awakened by a noise at her window, which she had left half-opened on account of the heat.

What was her terror, when, in the feeble starlight, she saw a form climbing noiselessly through the window. She tried to scream, but her throat was parched with fright, and she could not utter a sound.

The form had entered the chamber. Then the poor woman hastily buried her head beneath the bedclothing.

After about a quarter of an hour, she timidly peeped out. She could see or hear nothing. Slightly reassured, she recovered the use of her voice, and started a series of shrieks, so sharp, piercing, and terrible that in an instant the entire chateau was alarmed. Everybody rushed into her chamber with lights in their hands, the Marquis and Marquise at the head.

"What is it? What's the matter?" they cried.

She recounted her horrible vision. They would not believe her; she had been dreaming. Who could have climbed into this chamber; so high above the ground, without a ladder?"

"Did you see him plainly?" asked the Marquis, with a touch of suspicion in his voice.

"As plainly as I see you, and it seemed—"

"What?"

"It seemed as though I could recognize Doctor Cornabuc, in his fair wig and redingote."

Everybody laughed. What! Doctor Cornabuc! A man of his age and character scaling windows at midnight! It was certain now that Madam De Lartigues had been dreaming. They tried to dissipate her fear, and she was just about to persuade herself that she had been the victim of a hallucination, when she happened to cast her eyes upon the dressing-table, where she had left her jewels.

They were gone! It had truly been a robber!

The laughing suddenly ceased, and they looked at one another in consternation.

All at once another cry was heard, a piercing shriek coming through from Miss Hawthorne's chamber. There was a rush for her apartment, and the English lady was found, standing in the middle of the room, with frightened eyes.

"There! there!" she cried, pointing to the window. "A man! He escaped; but I recognized him."

"Who was it?"

"Doctor Cornabuc."

The doctor again! This time nobody laughed. Cornabuc was looked for among the persons who had been attracted by the excitement; but was not there. He was the only occupant of the chateau who was missing.

"Come, let us go to the doctor's room," said the Marquis, knitting his brows. "He will doubtless solve the mystery for us."

All followed Kerdall—the men half-dressed, the women in their night-robes, all carrying candles—a weird procession.

Upon the entrance of the crowd, the doctor hurriedly wrapped himself in the bedclothes, his wrinkled countenance alone being visible over the top, and that convulsed by anger into a comical grimace. The candle-light was reflected from his bald pate, which shone like old ivory.

"Is this some ill-timed joke?" he stormed. "What is going on? Is the chateau on fire? I heard a terrible outcry, and was just about to inquire into it."

"You must come and join us, doctor," said Kerdall.

"And how shall I do it?" cried the doctor furiously. "Some rascal has run off with my clothing, and in exchange he has left me this," and he savagely hurled a white object into the middle of the room.

"My petticoat!" murmured Miss Hawthorne, modestly lowering her eyes.

"And this," continued the doctor, wildly brandishing another article.

"My hat!" cried Madam De Lartigues.

Suddenly, a strange sound was heard coming from the ground floor. It was certainly the piano in the reception-room, but it was surely being played by goblin fingers, and so furiously that it seemed as though the keys must be broken.

"This is too much!" cried the Marquis, rushing toward the staircase, with all the crowd, excepting Doctor Cornabuc, close behind him.

They hastily penetrated the salon. It was empty. The mysterious visitor was gone, but he could not be far away. The crash of china and glass announced his presence in the dining-room.

Everybody rushed thither, and the Marquis, who was in the lead, dimly saw a form escaping through the window into the garden.

"This time we've got him!" he cried.

The men seized guns and knives from a hunting-rack in the vestibule, and started across the garden and park in pursuit of the fugitive, while the woman barricaded themselves in the salon and anxiously awaited the result of the chase.

It was about an hour later, in the uncertain light which precedes the rising of the sun, that a servant discovered the mysterious stranger ensconced among the branches of a large oak. At his call, the Marquis and his guests hastened to the spot.

"Come down!" commanded Monsieur De Kerdall; but the bandit only settled himself deeper among the foliage, and made no response.

"Come down, or I will shoot."

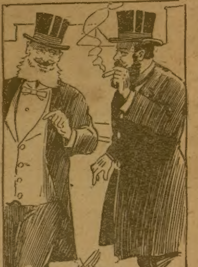
And, as there was still no reply, he lifted his gun and already had his finger upon the trigger, when the domestic hurriedly pulled his arm and said:

"Do not fire, monsieur! It is Doctor Cornabuc!"

And sure enough, the fair wig and long redingote could now be seen among the leaves.

But at this moment the first ray of sunlight gleamed in from the east, and the oak was illuminated. The Marquis suddenly broke into a fit of explosive laughter, and, as his guests gazed up into the tree, they could not keep from following his example.

It was the ape!



"Does your boy stammer all the time?"
"No, only when he talks!"

A Stonewall Jackson Story.

"Stonewall Jackson," said a Virginia veteran, "used to tell a good story about a bridge builder.

"This bridge builder was called Old Miles. He was very necessary to Jackson, because the flimsy bridges on the line of march were continually being swept away by the floods or destroyed by the enemy, and in these contingencies Miles was a regular jewel. He could run you up a bridge in the time it would take another man to make the measurements.

"One day the Union troops burnt a bridge across the Shenandoah. Stonewall Jackson called old Miles to him and said:

" 'You must put all your men to work, Miles, and you must keep them at it all night, for I've got to have a bridge across this stream by morning. My engineer—an invaluable fellow, by the way—will draw up the plans for you.'

"Well, early the next morning Jackson, very much worried, met old Miles.

" 'See here,' he said dubiously, 'how about that bridge? Did the engineer give you the plan?'

"Old Miles took the cigar from his mouth and flicked the ashes off with a sneer.

" 'General,' he said, 'the bridge is done, I dunno whether the picter is or not.' "

Every Lady Read This.

Years ago when I was a sufferer, an old nurse told me of a wonderful cure for Leucorrhœa, Displacements, Painful Periods, Uterine and Ovarian troubles. It cured me in one month. It is a simple, harmless lotion that can be prepared by any one having the recipe. I will send it free to every suffering sister who writes to me. Address Mrs. A. Hudnut, South Bend, Indiana.

Sauce for the Gander.

Mr. Fussy—I don't see why you wear those ridiculously big sleeves when you have nothing to fill them.'

Mrs. Fussy—Do you fill your silk hat?

TO THE WANDERER.

Though you shall wander the wide world o'er,
By mountain and plain and sea,
Though you beach your keel on the farthest shore,
Still you shall dwell with me;
For the call of the heart is the strongest call,
And its lure is the strongest lure,
And so you must come to me after all—
Of that I am sure—I am sure!

Though the years drag on and my hair turns gray,
And alone and feeble I grope,
Yet shall the light of each new-born day
Find me with new-born hope;
Your eyes may darken 'neath death's dread pall,
But my faith shall not have passed,
For the call of the heart is the strongest call—
You must turn to me at the last!

POTTS' MOTHER-IN-LAW.

BY POTIPHAR POTTS, ESQ.

I am a man very greatly blessed.

I realize it more and more as the days go by.

Araminta Maude frequently remarks to me that I do not appreciate the blessings of a home, a wife, a competency, and "dear mother" to see after everything. Perhaps I don't.

It is about a year ago that Mrs. Potts' mother came to set up her household gods, and her family altar, in my home—I should say our house.

She has been three times wedded, and the connubial bliss of her several spouses was so deep and intense that it proved too much for them. It sapped the spring of life, and No. 1 went off in a fit; No. 2 perished of slow consumption, and No. 3, though he held out for nearly fifteen years, and fought his way like a hero, died at last, at the end of a halter, in his stable. He was too happy to live here, and he wanted to go where happiness is not such a strain upon the system.

Mrs. Binkley—that is her name—Binkley was the name of the lamented No. 3—came to reside with us. Her heart, she said, was broken. She should have no content, nor solid peace, until they laid her by the side of Binkley. But, nevertheless, she ate well, and slept well, and looked rosy, and she weighed, at latest accounts, two hundred and four. She is a weighty woman, but I suppose it is the weight of woe.

Mrs. Binkley reads all the articles on health. She is ready and anxious to die, so as to be with Binkley, but still she is greatly interested in the subject of health.

Every new cure she sees mentioned she is eager to try; not that anything ails her, but she believes in the legend, "An ounce of preventive is better than a pound of cure."

She has been a disciple of cold water, and hot water, and the various tasteless breakfast-foods, and grapes, and scores of other humbugs, but let that pass. Her latest attack was the dog cure. Somebody wrote an article, and published it in one of her favorite journals, on the healthfulness of dogs by way of companions, and Mrs. Binkley was charmed with it.

She was sure that a dog was just what she needed. She wanted companionship and genial society. She missed Binkley so much! A dog would be such a comfort! So faithful, so affectionate, so health-producing.

She asked me to look her up a canine. I was horror-struck; for if there is anything I especially abominate, it is a dog. Besides, I am afraid of them. I don't think their faithfulness and affection make up for their fleas and hydrophobia.

I told Mrs. Binkley plainly that I would not have a dog in my house. Araminta Maude turned upon me, with fire in her eye.

"Potts," said she, in her most awful tone; "if you please, it is not your house. It is our house. I made shirts to pay for painting the parlor. And if dear mother wants a dog, she shall have it—yes, fifty of 'em if she says so!"

"She'll keep 'em in the parlor, then," said I, beginning to feel as if I was in for it, and fixing a longing eye on my hat.

"She'll keep 'em where she pleases—and where I please, Mr. Potts," said Mrs. P. "I, nor dear mother, ain't a-going to be tossed round by any such specimen of a man as you are—so there!"

"The dog sha'n't come," said I, in my most decided tones.

"The dog shall come," said Mrs. P., ditto.

"Don't have any words over it, my dear child," said Mrs. Binkley, with her handkerchief to her nose. "It is little consequence about me, whether I live or die. Oh, no; if a dog would save my life, it wouldn't be best for me to have him. No, indeed; I wouldn't think of it. I'm sorry I mentioned it. I'm a poor, lone creetur, with nobody to protect me! Oh, that my husbands—some of them—were here! Oh, that my lamented Binkley were alive! Oh, that—oh—oh—oh—oh——"

And here she gave up entirely, and pitched onto the sofa in a dead faint, and broke two of the springs off shorter than a pipe-stem. Cost me five dollars to get them repaired.

Mrs. Potts requested me in a very dignified tone to leave the house. She said I was a brute; and also added the remark that I was a murderer! and she supplemented it by adding that "dear mother" should have the dog, if it cost a thousand dollars.

When I came home that day at noon I heard a great deal of confusion in the house as I entered. Slamming of doors, yells of "Get out!" mingled with smashing of crockery and the shrill tones of Bridget scolding at the top of her voice.

I opened the dining-room door and beheld a scene. Mrs. Potts on a table with her skirts tucked round her; Mrs. Binkley with a soup-plate in her hand as a weapon of defense. Bridget gesticulating with the broom, and a large white-and-liver-colored dog growling in the corner, and crunching with evident satisfaction the two-dollar roast of beef I had brought home the night before.

"How come that beast here?" cried I, in wrath, seizing a chair to make an attack.

"It's dear mother's dog," cried Mrs. P., "and if you lay a finger on him I'll never live with you another day, and I'll never be called by the name of Potts any more, and I'll have a divorce, and I'll sue you for assault and battery! Oh, he's coming to me! Lordy! call him off, Potts—do, that's a good Potty! Drat the critter! how he shows his teeth!"

"And it's meself as'll not stop in the house another blessed day, if that brute is to stay. And sure he's tore up me Sunday hat, and bit the cat's tail clare off; and ate the boned turkey, and the cold pudding, and now he's at the beef! The saints preserve us!"

"But he is perfectly kind and gentle, the man said, and fit for a playmate for women and children; and so healthy," said Mrs. Binkley, getting behind a chair, as the dog emitted another growl.

"Clear the room," said I; "that dog don't stay here another minute."

"He stops as long as he pleases," said my wife. "He's dear mother's dog—and I'd like to see all the Pottses in the world interfere with him—so I would!"

I seized the broom from the hands of Bridget, and made a dive for the dog. He scooted to another corner of the room.

Mrs. Potts seized me by the coat-tail, and admonished me that I interfered with that dog at my peril.

Mrs. Binkley threw her soup-plate at my head, and hit the looking-glass—a thirty-dollar one—breaking it into fragments. A woman's aim is generally accurate.

I made another rush at the dog; he darted under the table, and across the room, and I kept as near as possible. The door was slippery with the gravy from the roast. I stepped in about a cupful of it, and came down, with my head in a basket of worsteds, and embroidery, and other female abominations, full of pins and needles; and as my heels went up they struck the coffee-urn, and brought that down, with its contents.

And just then my mother-in-law sat down on me, and remarked to her daughter:

"Get the dog to my room, Arminta; I can manage him!"

And she spoke the words of truth and soberness. I might as well have attempted to move with Mount Washington on my stomach. I kicked, and squirmed, and bit, and said a few profane words, but Mrs. Binkley warned me to look out and not lose my soul, and maintained her sitting.

It was nearly an hour before she let me up. It took my wife that length of time to coax off the dog.

I am very sore and stiff. The weight of woe was too much for me.

I have said nothing; but I have purchased, along with a quart of arnica for my bruises, a couple of ounces of strychnine, and I am lying in wait for that dog. If I can get him to swallow it, we'll see how long he'll continue a "healthy dog." I am master in our house yet.

Crafty John.

Genial John, the old king of ancient times, was observed to be piloting old Diogenes among the biggest thieves and grafters of the age.

"Why don't you steer him among good people," asked the astonished friend. "Why, he will never find an honest man among that rabble."

Genial John laughed craftily.

"Ah, my friend," he whispered, "you are not wise. If Diogenes should find an honest man he would naturally extinguish his lantern and stop using my oil. Therefore, it is to my advantage that he should continue the search."

And Genial John started for Egypt to have another wig made.

Ignorance of Man.

Her Husband—Why didn't you get shoes big enough to be comfortable?"

His Wife—The idea! How could I be comfortable if I had on big shoes?

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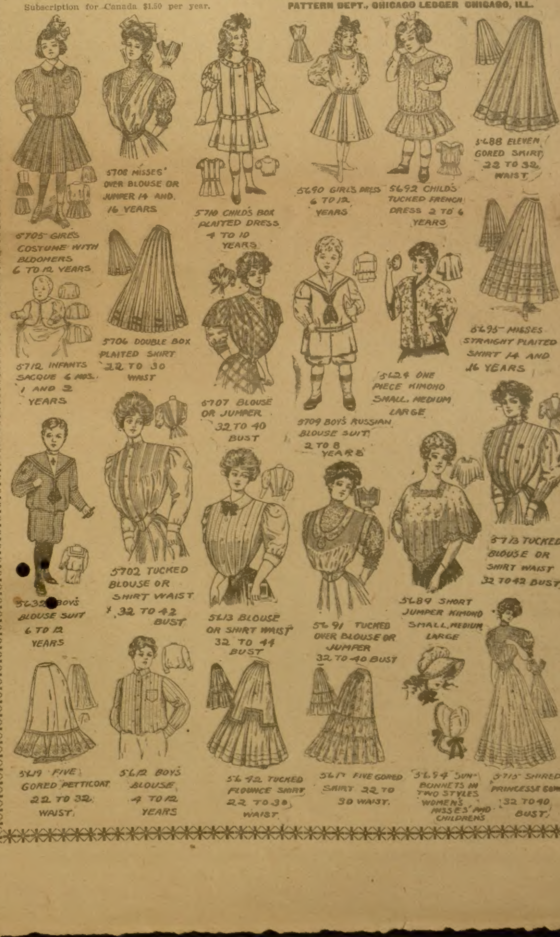
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When answering advertisements you will favor the advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger

FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

HIDE AND SEEK.

Oh, the merry summer days, when the garden flowers are gay,
And we stay up till quite late, and have lots of time to play!
Little Gwenny from the Hall comes to tea three times a week.
And of all the games we play, far the best is Hide and Seek.

There's a place that Gwenny likes, by an ivy-covered door;
It is rather dark and creepy, and she springs out with a roar;
I wouldn't be a coward, but I somehow have to jump,
For I feel a wee bit frightened, and it makes my heart go thump.

But the best of all our places is the one that Daddy found;
It's in the little wood he calls the Happy Hunting Ground—
It's a hole inside an old oak tree, just big enough for one,
And as it's our own secret, you can guess we have some fun.

The others haven't found it yet, not even Pat or Dick,
For the hole is very tiny and the ivy's very thick,
So we always win at Hide and Seek, although we are so small;
And that is why we say it is the nicest game of all.

"Foolish Fires."

If you should happen to be in the woods on a dark night and should suddenly see a bright light with a bluish tinge, don't get frightened. The light doesn't come from the glaring orbs of a panther, or of even a wildcat. It is only a harmless bit of decayed wood, which, in the course of decomposition, emits phosphoric light. You may readily dig this luminous wood out from the body of the decayed tree, and it will retain its luminosity for some days after you have removed it. In a dark room it looks very beautiful, and it is a pity that this beauty gradually fades until you have only a bit of rotten wood left. But this light-giving property of decomposing wood has nearly frightened the life out of many a novice in wood lore.

Who has not heard of the will-o'-the-wisp, Jack-o' lantern, or ignis-fatuus, as we say in Latin, meaning "foolish fire?" But comparatively few people have seen it, and nobody knows just what causes it. There is no doubt that the ignis-fatuus is a tangible thing—something more than the usual fabric of a nursery story—but what is it? Naturalists all have their opinions about it, but these opinions widely vary.

It usually appears in marshy districts, and the most plausible opinion is that it emanates from the decomposition of bones, generating gas charged with phosphorus, which ignites by contact with atmospheric air. The trouble in solving the mystery arises from the fact that you can't capture a Jack-o'-lantern and take it home for chemical analysis. No matter how carefully you approach the mysterious light it will elude you and airily dance on ahead. The bubble of luminous gas is disturbed by the slight agitation of the air caused by your approach, and hence the attempt to capture it is as impossible as to catch up with you own shadow.

But the most interesting of the strange and harmless lights are those that come from living animals. The little fire-fly is the most common type of animals that are self-luminous. It is familiar even to city-bound people, with its bright and regular flashes of light in the evening. Did you ever catch one and examine it closely? It is a pretty little beetle, generally light brown, marked with red and handsomely striped. The mysterious light is emitted from the last three segments of the abdomen.

Our little fire-flies, however, are only as a taper beside an electric light compared with luminous beetles found in the West Indies and parts of South America. If you were in a rural district of San Domingo, for example, and should desire to read at night, you might be surprised to have placed on a table by your side a bottle containing a few luminous beetles. One of these beetles, it is said, will emit sufficient light to enable a person to read small print, while half a dozen of the little creatures will answer the purpose of an ordinary lamp.

Indian Girls' Game.

Indian girls have a game called Pah-pah-se-kah-way, which means "maidens' ball play." The ball consists of two deer-skin bags, five inches long and one inch wide, fastened together by strips of leather seven inches long. Each girl is armed with a stick five feet long with which she tries to catch the ball and carry it to the goal of her side.

The girls, with their long braids of hair, assemble in a group, and the ball is thrown among their uplifted sticks. The one who catches it, soon has it torn from her by the stick of another player, and so it is tossed among the playing sticks until a girl on the outskirts of the group gets it and starts to run home with the prize. The others run after her, and the game becomes rough, but Indian girls do not mind this.

All the while the game is being played, the girls keep up a gentle cry of "Amgoo"—a sound like the cooing of pigeons, which it is intended to imitate. Whole villages assemble to see this game, and prizes of red cloth, beads, and bright ribbons are given to the best players.

Monkey Fisherman.

For some years I lived in a small town not far from Frome, and, being very fond of fishing, I was able to indulge in my favorite pastime very often as the little river abounded in trout and I had permission to fish about eight miles of it, writes a correspondent of The London Field.

The only boat on the lake belonged to a Captain C., who rented a large house with grounds coming down to the lake, and he very kindly allowed me the use of the boat at all times. The captain was, perhaps, the finest fly fisherman I have ever seen, an enthusiast at the sport, and was often to be seen in the boat, his page boy rowing him about.

The other occupant of the boat was invariably a monkey that sat stolidly in the stern sheets. But when the captain hooked a fish Jocko was all activity, dancing about the boat in a most excited manner, and as soon as the captain had drawn the fish near enough the monkey, holding on to the gunwale with one hand, would seize the fish with the other, throw it into the boat and then resume his usual seat.

I never saw the monkey lose a fish, and Captain C. told me that he very rarely did miss one. He never took a landing net with him when the monkey accompanied him. I am well aware that few will believe this tale, but it is true in every respect.

FACE WASHING.

It seems to me the world would be
A very much nicer place
If all of the boys and all of the girls
Would cheerfully wash their face,
Not to mention their hands and necks,
And oh, little dears, their ears!
Without salting the basin of water
With floods upon floods of tears.
The flowers all bathe every morning
Before we are up—in the dew—
That's why they're so sweet and fragrant.
I would like to be sweet—wouldn't you?
The chickens all preen their feathers,
The pussy cat washes HER face,
The little bird sings as she shakes out her wings
And looks for a bathing place.
If I were a dear little girl like you,
Or a nice little boy like Billy,
I wouldn't be beat by a pussy cat,
Nor a chick, nor a bird, nor a lily.

Satan Pushed.

A minister's daughter, Katharine, had formed the habit of going to a neighbor's just about dinner time. Finally her mother said to her, "Katharine, if you ever feel like going there again at the wrong time you must say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'"

The next day Katharine was missing as usual. On her return her mother asked her: "Why didn't you say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan?'"

"I did mamma, but he pushed me all the way."

I WISH I COULD SWING.

I wish I could swing like a bird on a bough!
I wish I could fly like a bird in the blue!
But I'm heavy and awkward and do not know how
And all my relations are clumsy folks, too!

We delve and we dig, or we fancy we're playin'
While high overhead is a merry pow-wow,
And I know that the jolly bird-people are sayin
"He can never swing like a bird on a bough!
He doesn't know how!
He doesn't know how!
He never can swing like a bird on a bough!"

A Mutual Mistake.

My little cousin Helen had developed an alarming tendency to exaggerate everything she saw and heard, says a writer in the Chicago Tribune. One day she rushed in breathless and exclaimed: "Oh, mamma, zere's a big ljon on our front porch."

Her mother said: "No, Helen, you know that is only a dog."

Helen finally admitted she knew it was a dog. So her mother bade her go to her room and kneel down and ask God to forgive her for telling such a story. She was back in a few minutes with a radiant face. "Well, what did he say?" queried her mother.

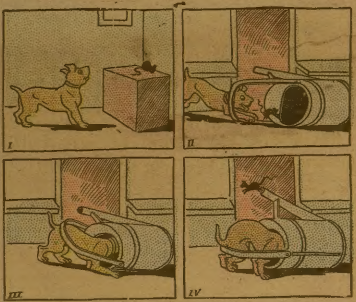
"Oh, mamma, he said, 'Never mind, little girl, that's nothing; I thought it was a lion at first myself.'"

Lost, Too.

Four-year-old Robbie was lost in a big city for an entire day, while his distracted parents were rushing from one police station to another in vain search. Late in the evening his excited father found him in a station playing contentedly under the matron's care. On seeing his father Robbie said, with much concern:

"Hello, papa, are you lost, too?"

AN OLD PROVERB ILLUSTRATED.



"Don't count your chickens."

OLD DOG DAN.

Last winter when my papa he
Took off the top the Christmas tree
A Teddy Bear brought jest f'r me
I told old Dan to run away,
My time was all took up f'r play.

I'm kinda sorry now that I
Talked that-a-way to Dan; for why?
'Cause all the animals you buy
You got to always "jest suppose,'
They ain't alive, as all folks knows.

But Dan—no sawdust sewed in him!
You cert'nly ort-a-see him swim
Out after sticks f'r Uncle Jim.
No, sir; I wouldn't trade a bark
Of Dan for a whole Noah's Ark.

Sees Moon in Morning.

Little Jack was the son of a professor in one of our Eastern colleges. One morning he chanced to awaken at the early hour of 5, and, looking out of the window, saw the moon just setting in the west. As his previous acquaintance with the moon had been limited to the evening hours, he was exceedingly astonished.

Climbing out of his crib he rushed into his father's room, and, pounding his sleeping father with his little fist, he shouted, "Papa, papa, wake up! I have the best joke on God. He forgot to take the moon in last night!"

No Life There.

Grandpa (to grandson, who has just come from a visit to the Natural History Museum)—Well, Tommy, where have you been?

Tommy—O, we've had a fairly good time, grandpa. We've been to a dead circus.